

# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or AWAKENED INDIA

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order  
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896



September 2015

Vol. 120, No. 9

₹ 10.00

# THE ROAD TO WISDOM

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON

## *Reason versus Religion—V*

Can there be a religion satisfying these two principles? I think there can be. In the first place we have seen that we have to satisfy the principle of generalisation. The generalisation principle ought to be satisfied along with the principle of evolution. We have come to an ultimate generalisation, which not only will be the most universal of all generalisations, but out of which everything else must come. It will be of the same nature as the lowest effect; the cause, the highest, the ultimate, the primal cause must be the same as the lowest and most distant of its effects, a series of evolutions. The Brahman of the Vedanta fulfils that condition, because Brahman is the last generalisation to which we can come. It has no attributes but is Existence, Knowledge and Bliss—Absolute. Existence, we have seen, is the very ultimate generalisation which the human mind can come to. Knowledge does not mean the knowledge we have, but the essence of that, that which is expressing itself in the course of evolution in human beings or in other animals as knowledge. The essence of that knowledge is meant, the ultimate fact beyond, if I may be allowed to say so, even consciousness. That is what is meant by knowledge and what we see in the universe as the essential unity of things. To my mind, if modern science is proving anything



again and again, it is this, that we are one—mentally, spiritually, and physically. It is wrong to say we are even physically different. Supposing we are materialists, for argument's sake, we shall have to come to this, that the whole universe is simply an ocean of matter, of which you and I are like little whirlpools. Masses of matter are coming into each whirlpool form, and coming out as matter again. The matter that is in my body may have been in yours a few years ago, or in the sun, or may have been the matter in a plant, and so on, in a continuous state of flux. What is meant by your body and my body? It is the oneness of the body. So with thought. It is an ocean of thought, one infinite mass, in which your mind and my mind are like whirlpools. Are you not seeing the effect now, how my thoughts are entering into yours, and yours into mine? The whole of our lives is one; we are one, even in thought.

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From *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*,  
(Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2013), 1.382–3.



**Vol. 120, No. 9**  
**September 2015**

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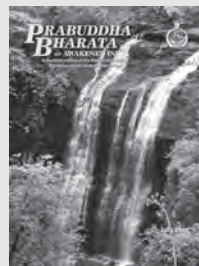
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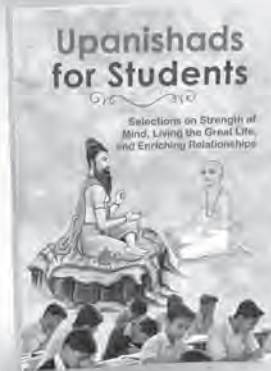
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*Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!*

## Maitrayaniya Upanishad

September 2015  
Vol. 120, No. 9

### मैत्रायणीयोपनिषत्

अथायं य ऊर्ध्वमुत्क्रामतीत्येष वाव स प्राणोऽथ योऽयमवाङ् संक्रामत्येष वाव सोऽपानोऽथ येन वा एता अनुगृहीता इत्येष वाव स व्यानोऽथ योऽयं स्थविष्ठो धातुरन्नस्यापाने प्रापयत्यणिष्ठो वाङ्मेऽङ्गे समानयत्येष वाव स समानसंज्ञा उत्तरं व्यानस्य रूपं चैतेषामन्तरा प्रसूतिरेवोदानस्याथ योऽयं पीताशितमुद्गिरति निगिरतीति वैष वाव स उदानः ।

॥ २.६ ॥

*Athayam ya urdhvam-utkramatityesha vava sa prano'tha yo'yamavang sankramatyesha vava so'pano'tha yena va eta anugrihita ityesha vava sa vyano'tha yo'yam sthavishto dbaturannasyapane prapayatyanishto vange'nge samanayatyesha vava sa samanasamjna uttaram vyanasya rupam chaiteshamantara prasutirevodanasyatha yo'yam pitashitamudgirati nigiratiti vaisha vava sa udanah.*

(2.6)

Now that breath which rises upwards is surely the Prana. Now that which moves downwards is surely the Apana. Now that by which these two are supported is surely Vyana. Now that which carries to the Apana, the gross elements of good and distributes the subtle elements in each limb, is surely the Samana. It is a higher form of the Vyana and between them is the production of the Udana. Now that which brings up or carries down what has been drunk and eaten is the Udana.

(2.6)



# THIS MONTH

**O**UR BODY IS OUR FIRST and foremost obstacle in spiritual life. The sooner we understand this the better and easier our spiritual journey would be. What are the challenges of the inevitable tool that is the body? Can expressions of the body be called spiritual expressions? To what extent should we give importance to the body and when should we ignore its pulls? These questions are critical in starting our spiritual journey to the final destination of realising our true self, the Atman. These questions and other aspects of the body are discussed in **Beyond Bodies**.

Swami Vivekananda travelled to so many places across the world. Many of the places he visited and the persons he came in contact with remain a mystery till date. Though we have many of his lectures recorded or transcribed by newspapers or his followers, probably an equal number, if not more, of his lectures and letters remain hidden around the world. Today, it is possible because of the Internet to access vast repositories of archives, old journals, and newspapers and to scour them for nuggets of information about Swamiji. Diane Marshall, graphic artist and art historian, discovered newspaper articles about an 1893 speaking engagement by Swami Vivekananda that has not previously been reported by his chroniclers. She is expanding the historic knowledge base of Swamiji's travels using the medium of vintage picture postcards at *Vivekananda Abroad: A Postcard Pilgrimage* on Blogger, where more images of this new discovery are posted. She visited Sterling and did extensive

research and her labour has seen fruition in the article **Unpublished Lecture of Swami Vivekananda in Sterling, Illinois**. We hope that her article would inspire others to embark on similar journeys to unravel many more unknown aspects of Swamiji's life.

Ethics and morality form the bedrock of spirituality. Without a proper ethical framework, it is impossible to even start the spiritual journey. This ethical structure could be called *Samanya* Dharma. This is discussed in **Samanya Dharma and Spirituality** by Nithin Sridhar, who is a civil engineer from Mysore, Karnataka, and has a deep interest in politics, history, religion, and philosophy especially in the context of Sanatana Dharma.

Sri Ramakrishna had a strong link with Nature. His teachings are interspersed with countless references to flora and fauna. The keen observer that he was, he could weave allegories out of them. The birds he referred to form an interesting study, one of which is presented in **The Birds of Sri Ramakrishna: The Vulture** by Dr Suruchi Pande, vice chairperson, Ela Foundation, Pune and head, Department of Ethno-Ornithology, MES Garware College, Pune.

In the eighth and concluding instalment of **Memory**, Swami Satyamayananda, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Kanpur, discusses about the classic heights of memory.

Science writer and bestselling author David DiSalvo writes another thought-provoking book, **Brain Changer**. From this book, we bring you this month's *Manana*.

# ***Beyond Bodies***

**O**UR BODY IS OUR FIRST ADDRESS. That is where we live, that is what we constantly associate our personality with. Our every action, speech, and thought is centred around our body. When one stands in front of the mirror, it is one's own body that a person thinks of as one's personality. Integral to our very existence in this ephemeral world, our body is the ladder to achieving anything, temporal or spiritual. Through this body, we have to toil and achieve our dreams of this mundane world. And it is through this body that we have to attempt to comprehend, contemplate, and realise the beyond. While we seem to have no problem adjusting ourselves to the fact that this body is a tool for achieving things temporal, it is beyond us, to most of us, how this body can be a stepping stone to things spiritual. The first step in understanding that this body can help us comprehend our true nature, our spiritual personality, is to understand that it is a window to our true personality, the Atman. It is because of the Atman that this body seems so potent, so conscious, and so powerful. It is because of the substratum of Atman that wrongly identifies with the body, that the body gets so much strength and importance. It would help us much if we understand that the body is just like a bully, whose influence grows the more you give importance to her or him. Ignore the bully and her or his sway wanes.

Though our first address is our body, we are just guests at that address. Our true home is elsewhere and we are convalescing our days of the illness of ignorance in the rest house of our bodies. When we would be cured of this terrible disease, we would

go back to the beautiful and pristine home we all have, the Atman. Our bodies are just passing stations in the long and arduous journey to our true nature. Our body is important only in that it forms a crucial part of the path and not because it has got anything to do with the destination. Spirituality is elusive to most of us because it is beyond

**Our bodies are just passing stations in the long and arduous journey to our true nature.**

the grasp of our senses. One has to transcend the grip of one's senses to have even an inkling of one's spiritual nature. This is where the problem lies. In the illness of ignorance we suffer from, it is rather cosy a thought to think of one's rest house to be the place where we would be resting forever. We think that this body is the be-all and end-all of our personality. Instead of being desperate to end the seemingly endless period of convalescence and get out of this rest house and go to our true home, we try to be at home there. We try to beautify that place. We intensify our association with it.

We know that our body is impermanent. But who acts that way? We spend much time, energy, and resources to maintain, beautify, and ensure that it does not stink. Yes, most of our effort in maintaining our body is to avoid its inherent stink. Our body contains so much filth that probably we would win a contest for being the filthiest living being in this universe! And we would also win a contest for being the living being that tries the most to cover up this filth! We have a tough time accepting the truth that the body is bound to perish and that it is nowhere becoming any less


filthy. To understand this and to come to terms with it would be another and a very important step towards our destination, the Atman.

As long as we remain identified with the body, as long as we need it to continue our spiritual journey, we need to maintain it. Just like a person driving a car needs to maintain it till one needs it or at the least, till one reaches the destination; we need to maintain our body till we realise our true nature. Hence, a basic hygiene, basic nutrition, minimum rest, and care and treatment in illness, are necessary till we have to drive our bodies. This is an unpleasant and inevitable task we have to do. A true spiritual aspirant would consider it unpleasant. However, most of us tend to make our lives pleasant by engrossing ourselves in these tasks. Most of us live a considerable part of our lives in activities involving the bedroom, bathroom, and the dining room! We forget that the destination is not the vehicle. We have to reach the destination, not make our homes in the vehicle. While eating, drinking, rest, and all other bodily pursuits are necessary, they are not the final goal of our spiritual lives.

The restraint of the senses becomes important in our spiritual lives in that it helps us to take our mind away from our body and fix it on our destination, the Atman. Almost all bodily pursuits are playgrounds for the senses. And the most active and titillating to the senses is the playground of bodily contact, the playground of sex. No true spiritual tradition or spiritual teacher would say that sexual activity or sexuality in the past disqualifies a person from becoming a spiritual aspirant. All the same, no true spiritual tradition or spiritual teacher would say that sexual activity or sexuality *is* the spiritual path. That is the most convenient stand one can take. Just because I cannot control the senses, just because I cannot control the sexual urge does not mean that I be controlled by the senses and that I be urged by sexuality. Sexuality is

*not* spirituality. One's sexual orientation or sexual preferences have nothing to do with spirituality. If that were true, then cats, dogs, and rabbits would have been the most spiritual. And rabbits would have been spiritual seers! The Atman and the senses, God and the senses, cannot be worshipped together. You are either spiritual or sexual. You cannot be both. The world has seen thousands of centuries of spiritual and religious life but is yet to see a person who could control one's internal and external environments through the power of spirituality and yet thrived in expressing one's sexuality. You would have to put off one to get the other.

Spirituality is the search for our true nature. It is a path open and inevitable to all of us. Sexuality is the expression of one's carnal desires. This is a trait primitive and instinctual in all of us but it is not inevitable. Spiritual life is for everyone. Even for people who had a sexual expression or a distinct sexual orientation. But, if one has to become spiritual one has to leave one's sexuality or sexual orientation. Just like the satisfaction one gets from eating one's favourite food after a long time is not spiritual illumination, understanding or finding one's natural sexual orientation is *not* spiritual realisation. If it were so, all the spiritual traditions would become big lies and all one would need to become spiritual was a session with one's therapist! Spirituality or self-realisation is not just 'coming out of the closet'. It is going beyond all orientations, not finding another one.

To set upon the journey of spirituality, the journey to realise one's true nature, is an informed choice. It is a state when you want to go beyond the body, beyond all orientations. We should remember that just like there are heterosexual and homosexual orientations, there is an asexual orientation, the orientation of the spiritual aspirant, who does not want to be bogged down by the pulls of the flesh but wants to transcend them and realise one's transcendent nature, the Atman. 



# Unpublished Lecture of Swami Vivekananda in Sterling, Illinois

Diane Marshall

UNTIL NOW, RESEARCHERS into Swami Vivekananda's life in the United States have been stymied by a blank period of six weeks between 14 December 1893 and 13 January 1894 during which Swamiji's activities were unknown—except for our unverified assumption that he spent the Christmas holidays with the Hale family. Any new documentation is newsworthy. Now we can say definitely where Swamiji went after his second visit to Minneapolis, thus adding three days to his documented chronology in the West.

He travelled to Sterling, Illinois to speak at the First Congregational Church on Saturday evening, 16 December. Sterling is a small industrial town of about 15,000 situated on the Rock River. It is roughly on the same latitude with Chicago, a hundred miles further west, yet still forty miles east of the Mississippi River. In 1893, Washington Moses Dillon, the town's premier industrialist, was producing there tons of barbed wire, drawn wire, bale ties, and nails; there was a large paper mill, and the town was prospering.

On 28 September 1893 a glowing account of events at the Parliament of Religions written by a reporter with the initials, C K B, was printed in the *Sterling Standard*. In particular, it highlighted some of the spontaneous remarks made from the platform, making the grand occasion living and vivid. C K B's article seems to have been very

influential in shaping Sterling readers' perception of Swami Vivekananda as shall be seen later:

Swami Vivekananda, the Buddha-faced Brahmin in yellow, presented Brahminism in a very superior manner. There has been no such concise and philosophical presentation of Christianity during this Parliament. In introducing him the chairman requested silence, 'I want to get him started right. When he gets started he will take care of himself.' And he did. Nara Sima Chari, Brahmin in white, is finer looking. They are both capable and well educated gentlemen, but the *hateur* [*sic*] of a superior caste shows itself in their faces, in their conversation. Yet Vivekananda intends to remain in this country and lecture, for the purpose of raising funds to organize a movement for the improvement of the condition of the poor in India. 'They have enough of the spiritual. I want to teach them some of your western materialism; your power of combining and organizing.' Those who think the Hindus have unworthy gods should have heard him say: 'Man's apprehension of God is blasphemy compared to the Infinite Perfection.'









Notice the transition as the reporter shifts from regarding Swamiji as an exotic, statuesque Oriental to admiring his intellect, then his dynamic personality, and finally recognising him as one capable of elevating and redefining our conception of God. Next, C K B describes a remarkable incident that revealed Swamiji's compassionate, common touch:

On Saturday the Scientific section had a query meeting, at the close of which Vivekananda was to speak on The Attitude of Brahminism toward Buddhism. During the meeting a man who had asked what proof there is of the existence of a spirit in man, had been silenced, but neither convinced nor answered by the jests of the audience and the teacher. When it was Vivekananda's turn to speak a half hour later, he said: 'Before I speak upon my subject let me answer, as best I may, that question about man's spirit. I wish I could convey in writing the earnestness and tenderness with which he said: 'I do not condemn the man who does not *know* that he has a soul', and then proceeded with the most eloquent and philosophical argument for immortality that I ever heard, while at the same time he declared that the existence of a soul was not so much a subject to be proved by the reason as by individual experience and consciousness.

By daring to answer the heckler, Swamiji had taken command not only of the stage, but of the audience's sense of justice:

If there is any one thing more than another which we ought to learn from the Orientals, it is their entire tolerance of and fairness in meeting the opinions of others. They accept Christ unhesitatingly and speak with the utmost reverence of 'Lord Jesus', and if they speak with equal reverence of 'Lord Buddha', and believe that at other times through the ages God has spoken to his children through the lips of some Highest Man, shall we say theirs is a conception less worthy of God than the one which declares that He has spoken but once and to one people?<sup>1</sup>

Finally, C K B planted the seed of desire in

someone's mind to obtain Swami Vivekananda as a speaker by stating that after the Parliament, Swamiji intended to remain in this country and lecture, and endorsed that idea by testifying: 'On Sunday morning we heard Vivekananda preach from the pulpit of a Christian church, such a sermon as might well teach Christians how to love their own God.'<sup>2</sup>

The semi-anonymous C K B seems to have written most of the articles about the Parliament of Religions for the *Standard*, including a series titled 'Post-Parliament Notes'.<sup>3</sup> The Post-Parliament column of 19 October recollects an amazingly emotional scene that will surely give present readers a thrilling glimpse into Swamiji's spiritual mood that day:

One day at a meeting where the tenets of the Shinto sect were discussed, Vivekananda, who was to make the closing remarks, sat chafing at the whole proceeding. It was with a protest that he gave the information desired of him, and then said: 'And now let me speak to you for a moment upon a subject more congenial to me. What is Shintoism, or Brahminism, or Buddhism, or Christianity? What are all sects and all religions compared to a knowledge of the one true God?' and for a brief ten minutes he held before those people an image of the living God undimmed by the mists of doctrines and dogmas. This simple statement of a natural religion, which every man can understand, moved the hearts of the listeners as they had apparently never been moved before. When he ceased men and women gathered about him asking with trembling voices, 'How shall we find God?' 'Seek and ye shall surely find. Knock and it shall be opened unto you.'

To another saying: 'I have studied the doctrines of all the churches but can believe none of them', he answered, 'Then sweep them all away. Make clear the highway for your God.'

To one saying: 'I cannot believe in Trinity', he replied, 'Why should you care, for God is one.'







To another: 'God is your Father, he will surely answer if you call to Him in earnest.'

'Never mind how others seek him. Seek Him in your own way.' And so he turned from one to another with a word of strength and assurance to each.

This spectacle of men and women in a christian land, with hungry, upturned faces beseeching a swarthy Hindu to aid them in a search for their own God; men fired by one glimpse of God unobstructed by the theories of men,—this spectacle is one to furnish food for reflection to all of us—laity as well as clergy.

'Do I love God?' asks the Brahman. 'Do I love Him for His own sake—for love's sake? Do any of us love God just the same when we have no coat as when we have one? Or do we love Him with a tradesman's love, which seeks for profit? Away with your love and service which hopes for selfish gain. Away with the love which loves for what God can do for us. Away with your begging prayers which say, 'Oh, Lord, give me wealth; give me power; give me health, or give me happiness—even.' Pray only, 'Oh, God, show me Thyself.'

There is no love except the mother's love for her sickly, deformed child, which gives all, asking no return. All other love is self-love. All other service is self-seeking.

'How can I serve God by serving my brother?' 'Oh, Lord, TAKE ME!'<sup>4</sup>

The sharp-eyed C K B noticed Swamiji's discomfort on the platform. It appeared as if he was struggling to control the spiritual current rising up inside him. He could barely conclude his formal address before the genie burst out of the bottle. The inspired words he spoke were pure Sri Ramakrishna. Oh, those lucky Chicago people, for whom God was made instantly palpable. After reading this astonishing account, I have no doubt that there were some readers in Sterling who pressed the newspaper to their hearts and prayed. I think it would not be far-fetched

to say that their prayers were answered, because Swamiji came to their town.

Now, of course the question arises, who brought Swamiji to Sterling? Any number of interested Sterling citizens might have travelled to Chicago to attend the proceedings of the Parliament of Religions or some of the smaller denominational conventions that were taking place concurrently. But while Swamiji may have already been seen first-hand by a few from Sterling, it is more likely that newspaper reports prompted a flood of requests to see him in person. There were many who longed to see the colourful Orientals that they had read about in the papers.

Their first task was to find out how to contact Swami Vivekananda in Chicago.

One nearby minister who already had the connections to invite Swamiji to Sterling was the Reverend Lewis J Duncan, pastor of the Church of Good Will in Streator, Illinois. Swamiji had lectured there on October 8 and 9, so Duncan could personally vouch for the high calibre of his oratory. Reverend Duncan began the Non-Sectarian society of Rock Falls—Sterling's twin city on the opposite bank of the Rock River—in April 1892. He continued to pastor this group monthly until June 1893, when the group was served only at intervals by various outside ministers until the following year.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, in the fall of 1893, while the Non-Sectarian society was without a regular preacher, L J Duncan may have sympathetically suggested that they engage Swamiji as a speaker. While this is plausible, there is no evidence that his visit to Sterling was sponsored by the Non-Sectarian society. Also, he spoke at the First Congregational church—an unlikely venue for the Non-Sectarians.<sup>6</sup>

Instead, newspaper sources indicate that Swamiji's talk was sponsored by the Woman's Relief Society/Association—both terms were used. If the Relief Society was a civic organisation then

its membership came from all denominations. There was such a civic organisation in Sterling: the Woman's Relief Corps. It was the women's auxiliary of the Grand Army of the Republic, a Civil War veterans association. The Will Robinson G A R Post 274 had its headquarters in City Hall until 1895.<sup>7</sup> It is possible that some women of the Woman's Relief Corps were members of the First Congregational church of Sterling and therefore asked the new pastor, Reverend Theodore Crowl, for permission to use the sanctuary.<sup>8</sup> This was similar to the situation in Minneapolis, where Reverend Simmons hosted Swamiji at the First Unitarian Church, but his booking was actually sponsored the first time by the Peripatetics Club and the second time by Kappa Kappa Gamma. These were the clubs that sold the tickets and paid the speakers.

In any case, people were talking and planning and it was not long until this notice appeared in the *Sterling Standard* on 23 November 1893: 'People have manifested so much interest in the foreign religions represented in the Parliament that an effort is being made to have some of their representatives lecture in Sterling. For the purpose of learning what exactly it is that they do believe, the audience will be allowed to ask questions at the close of the lecture. Hirai, the Japanese Buddhist, will be here. Dec. 2.'<sup>9</sup>

Hirai? Yes, apparently Swami Vivekananda and Kinza Riuge Minamoto Hirai were a double booking. Swamiji had previously split a lecture series with Hirai at Hinsdale Unity Church in early October. He had also previously shared a lecture series with B B Nagarkar at Hinsdale and at Englewood and Des Moines. Additionally, he shared the platform with Carl von Bergen in Evanston. Swamiji, and the other foreign delegates named here, had been recommended as speakers via the Western Unitarian Conference—which is probably how Reverend Duncan had connected with him.<sup>10</sup>

However plans were not finalised as late as 30 November 1893, because a notice in the *Sterling Standard* said: 'At the Buddhist lecture Saturday night, the audience will decide whether the great Brahmin monk shall lecture here.'<sup>11</sup> Swamiji's plans sometimes changed at short notice. While he was in Des Moines, for example, the *Iowa State Register* announced on 29 November 1893: 'His dates west have been cancelled and he will speak on Thanksgiving night at the same place [Central Church of Christ].'<sup>12</sup> Recently the location of that cancellation has been discovered. Swamiji had been booked to speak 250 miles further west at the Auditorium in Ottawa, Kansas, as attested by an enthusiastic announcement in the *Ottawa Daily Republic* on 27 November 1893. The paper promised it would be 'one of the grandest opportunities of a lifetime' to see 'one of the greatest men in the world.'<sup>13</sup> This was not blind praise, for the reporter had actually seen Swamiji speak in Chicago and declared he would never forget him. Unfortunately for Ottawa, the next day's paper carried the terse announcement that his engagement had been cancelled by telegram. Apparently Swamiji had been held over by popular demand in Des Moines. Not only did he speak again to Reverend H O Breeden's congregation, he had his first opportunity to speak directly to college students at Drake University's chapel. In return, his hosts treated him to his first Thanksgiving dinner and he witnessed a Christian baptismal service. He returned to Chicago to speak at the Central Music Hall on 4 December 1893 on the topic of 'The Divinity of Man.' Henry Slayton's offices were in the Central Music Hall, so Swamiji may have received confirmation of his lecture date for Sterling then.

Booking Swamiji through letters circulated through the Unitarian grapevine—or through another string of acquaintances—did not necessarily preclude Slayton's Lecture Bureau management. It seems that the Sterling newspapers were



in possession of some advance advertising materials that had Slayton's testimonial tone. On 8 December 1893 the *Sterling Gazette* announced: "An orator by divine right" was an expression made in reference to Vive Kananda. He will be in Sterling the 19th of December and should be greeted with a large audience.<sup>14</sup> The *Evening Gazette's* date of the 19th—which was incorrect—was probably a typo rather than a change in booking, because it was followed the next day by this notice in the *Sterling Standard*: 'Vive Kananda the Brahmin monk will lecture at City Hall on December 16th.' Then on 11 December 1893 the *Evening Gazette* offered two news items that sounded as if they were culled from a professionally written brochure: 'Dr. Barrows, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Chicago, has won the gratitude of the American public by introducing to it the orator from India, the devout and earnest worker for his fellow-men, Vive Kananda.' And 'One of Chicago's best physicians, Dr. Hackett Stephenson, says, "Swami Vive Kananda is a genius of wonderful versatility." Brilliant, genial and witty at a dinner table; tender and compassionate toward distress; haughty and scornful towards "omnipotent ignorance"; he rises into a passion of eloquence on his favorite theme of the true worship of the Infinite.'

Doubtless Slayton's bureau was behind this copywriting hyperbole. Every bit of the rhetoric was true—for in life Swamiji was even greater than the excesses of his advertising—but the clever name-dropping style suggests the editor copied this blurb from the lecture bureau's brochure. Dr Barrows himself did not particularly appreciate the notion that he was basking in Swamiji's reflected glory. And Dr Hackett Stephenson was Dr Sarah Hackett

Stevenson.<sup>15</sup> She was indeed a very good physician who knew Swamiji, but these were times when an endorsement from a male doctor carried more weight than an endorsement from a female doctor.

On 12 December 1893 the *Evening Gazette* put in another notice with the correct date and venue: 'For the poor—Congregational church Saturday Dec. 16—Swami Vivekananda.'<sup>16</sup>

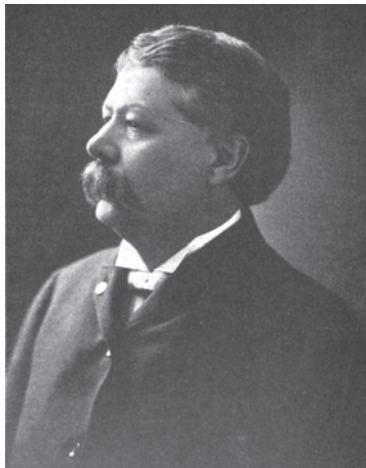
The *Sterling Standard* had probably not made a mistake when it first announced that Vivekananda would speak at City Hall on the 16th. Kinza Hirai spoke at City Hall on the evening of December 7. Unfortunately, there was a snowstorm that Saturday and many who had tickets to hear him did not show up. There may have been some additional reasons why City Hall did not prove congenial for the Relief Corps' event. The next day Hirai spoke at the Lutheran church, and Swamiji's venue was also changed to the First Congregational Church, only a block away from City Hall.

On 14 December the *Sterling Standard* caught up with the *Evening Gazette* and announced the change of venue with this conversational item: "I was not much interested in the Jap until I heard him; but he's a smart fellow", said one of our townsmen of Hirai. Hirai has now gone to New York—but a greater than Hirai is coming. Swami,

the lion of the Parliament, will be at the Congo. [Congregational] Church in this city, Dec. 16th.'

Hirai was a very accomplished and serious speaker. On this occasion the *Sterling Standard* printed a clear synopsis of his speech including several amusing stories he told as examples of culture clash. Buddhism, having been founded by the historically real and unassailably noble Gautama Buddha, was on some levels more comprehensible to

Alfred Bayliss (1847–1911)



nineteenth-century Americans than the bewildering labyrinth of Hinduism.

The very notion that an unapologetic Hindu was about to ascend a church pulpit in their town was enough to get some people's hackles up. Predictably, on 12 December a letter was printed in the *Evening Gazette* formally protesting Swamiji's impending visit, calling him an 'avowed enemy of the cross of Christ'. The letter writer was John Buyerr, self-identified as an evangelical church member, who felt that he must warn the public about 'certain evils that are at work and perhaps *thoughtlessly* being countenanced by those who are the custodians of the Christian faith and public morals'. He asked:

Who is this Vive Kananda? Is he a convert to Christianity? By no means. He spoke at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago. *The Forum* quotes from his speech as follows: 'What shall we think of a religion whose missionaries distribute food in famine, to the starving people, on condition of conversion.' ... When this Hindu uttered the above slander in relation to protestant missionaries, who rose in the Parliament of Religions to countenance him? Bishop Keane, rector of the great Catholic University at Washington. This Roman priest is reported as saying: 'I endorse the denunciation hurled against the system of pretended charity that offered food to the hungry Hindus, at the cost of their conscience and their faith.'

Buyerr took Bishop Keane's endorsement of Swamiji as a further insult to Protestant missionaries, and proceeded with a diatribe against the meddling of Roman Catholics in Washington politics. He concluded with a dire warning against the proposed visit to Sterling of the agnostic lecturer Robert Ingersoll: 'He goes up and

down the land, breathing out hatred to Christianity, "scattering firebrands, arrows, and death".'

Well, sure enough, the next day the *Evening Gazette* printed a rebuttal letter in Swamiji's defence written by Mrs A Bayliss. She wrote a tactful but spirited letter. A little research revealed A Bayliss to be Prof. Alfred Bayliss, Superintendent of Sterling's schools, and his wife was Clara Kern Bayliss. She was an 1871 graduate of Hillsdale College, Michigan and had done postgraduate study with the University of Chicago. The firm of Newcomer and Bayliss were the publishers of the *Sterling Standard*, and Alfred had been its former editor. Clara contributed numerous articles to newspapers.



Clara Kern Bayliss (1848–1948)

In her letter to the editor Clara does not claim to have actually met Swamiji, although she quotes him. As I was pondering upon the source of her quotes, I realised that Clara Kern Bayliss was C K B, the *Sterling Standard's* mysterious correspondent for the Parliament of Religions!<sup>17</sup> She *had* seen Swamiji in person. The first time she described him in the press, on 21 September, she was misinformed about his identity:

Manilal Dvivedi, Brahmin from Bombay, wears wide pantalets, dress and folded turban of yellow, and has a round benevolent face which is bright and youthful and breaks into frequent smiles. His countenance so much resembles the images of Buddha that it is hard to believe he is a Brahmin. He is a general favorite and crowds gather to hear him converse during the recesses. Sometimes he changes his costume to scarlet.

Manilal Dwivedi did not attend the Parliament; therefore her description clearly matches Swami Vivekananda.<sup>18</sup>

Clara's strong letter was full of faith and liberality of heart. Even so, I must disclaim the

following direct quote from her letter because certain commonplace nineteenth-century terms are obviously no longer acceptable: ‘The Methodist Bishop Arnett of Kentucky, making justice of his fellow Christians in the Parliament of Religions said: “Try the nigger, before you hang him.” Now this is what we ask for the Hindu, “Try the Indian before you hang him.”’ In her 28 September article, she did not use the ‘n’ word.<sup>19</sup> She goes on to defend Swamiji in the names of all the stellar Christian dignitaries at the Parliament of Religions, saying, ‘We cannot presume to impeach the judgment of all of these wise ones.’ She waxes inspired and asks: ‘And are not Vivi Kananda and Hirai the children of “the true God”? What other God is there who could have created them? Who else preserves them and permits them to lecture?’ Bayliss throws Buyerr’s words back at him with: “Is this Vivi Kananda a convert to Christianity? By no means.” Is he or Hirai “the avowed enemy of Christianity”? By no manner of means. No one endorses the teachings of Jesus, which is the true Christianity, more heartily than they.’ She then repeats a quote from her 28 September article: ‘Vivi Kananda says: “Man’s apprehension of God falls so far short of the infinite Perfection that it is almost like blasphemy.”’ She continues with two other quotes by Swamiji that she must have heard directly: ‘All men love God, because he is love itself.’ ‘And why should I not love and revere Lord Jesus?’ She concludes eloquently: ‘If these are the enemies of Christianity, would that we had more such enemies in our own as well as foreign lands.’

One hundred and twenty years ago multiculturalism was barely a budding concept and what we now call interfaith was a suspicious novelty. The only public defence of Swamiji that a Christian woman could mount in a provincial town was that he was virtually more Christian than most Christians. Hinduism per se was not considered defensible—that rocky ground could

only be plowed by Swamiji himself. In fact, the word Hindu, more commonly, Hindoo, had such bad press that Vivekananda was billed as a representative of ‘Brahminism’ and therefore his frequent appellation in the press as a ‘Brahmin Monk’ was not a misrepresentation of his premonastic Kayastha caste, but just a more acceptable way of saying he was Hindu.

The next day, 14 December, the *Evening Gazette* printed this somewhat patronising acknowledgement: ‘Many very kind criticisms have been made upon Mrs. Bayliss’ article in yesterday’s issue. The lady is a member of the Woman’s relief association, and is conscientiously interested in that work and having Vive Kananda successful at the Congregational church. The meaning of the term Brahman is the perfect humanitarian and follower of the Creator.’

Did Clara Bayliss give the *Gazette* this definition of Brahman? What was her real religious outlook? She called Swamiji a lover of Jesus, but was rather proud that he was not Christian. The *Sterling Standard* reported on 9 November, that she travelled to Chicago for a meeting of the Society for Ethical Culture. This fact tells us that Clara was searching for meaning to very deep questions, and she was willing to travel to follow her quest. The Society for Ethical Culture was an organisation founded by the philosopher, Felix Adler.<sup>20</sup> In 1893, the regular preacher for the Society in Chicago was Mangasar Magurditch Mangasarian, an Armenian rationalist educated in Constantinople and at Princeton. On 24 November 1893 a very curious article appeared in the *Sterling Gazette* titled ‘Conscience’: ‘At the Grand Opera House in Chicago each Sabbath lectures a man that we have never seen, but whose brilliancy greatly pleases us. He speaks before a society known as that of Ethical Culture. His topic last Sunday was “What is Conscience”’. The writer, who does



not name this brilliant speaker, gives an abstract of the lecture that was intellectually far beyond the *Gazette's* usual output of hometown politics and gossip. This raises the question, was Clara Bayliss already a devotee of M M Mangasarian, or was she just beginning to investigate his teachings? <sup>21</sup> Mangasarian was definitely deeper water than Reverend L J Duncan, who had been Sterling's 'alternative' preacher.

After all this anticipation, I truly wish that there were an actual transcription of Swamiji's talk in Sterling. Such as it is, here is the main article, in full, that appeared in the *Sterling Standard* on 21 December 1893:

A good-sized audience of intelligent and thoughtful people were at the Congregational church last Saturday evening to hear Vive Kananda, Hindoo, monk, Brahman, gentleman, scholar, and orator. Not one went away disappointed. Had it not been for the general impression that there would be an opportunity to hear him on Sunday, many more would have been present. Promise had been made for an address Sunday afternoon, but before introducing him Mr. W.W. Davis announced that it would be impossible, as Vive Kananda was obliged to leave for Chicago on the early morning train.

In his peculiarly happy style W.W. Davis introduced the speaker in the following choice language:

The greatest thing in the world, says Henry Drummond, is love, and we all believe it.

The greatest event in the world, before Christ, says Dean Stanley, was the passage of the Red Sea by the Israelites, and, I believe that, for it led to the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai, to the Jewish nation, to the Old Testament, to the birth of Christ, to the mission of Paul, to the evangelization of Europe, the discovery of America, the landing of the Pilgrims, the Declaration of Independence, of civil and religious liberty.

The greatest question ever asked in the world was asked by Pilate when Jesus Christ

stood before him. 'What is the truth?' inquired Pilate. What a momentous question! It is the question before us tonight. The question before us tomorrow, the question for all time. If we find the truth, and obey it—happiness; if we reject it—misery; for this life, and the life that is to come.

And as America has always been ready to welcome the Irishman and the Hollander, the Frenchman and the German, the Spaniard and the Turk, men of every creed and nationality in Europe—so let us exercise a broader charity, a more cosmopolitan sympathy, and welcome the men of Asia as well, the men of India, China, and Japan.

I take pleasure in presenting to you Swami Vive Kananda, our neighbor from India.

The lecture consisted of a brief synopsis of the Hindoo religion, and a most eloquent definition of Love—Drummond's answer to the great question, and was followed by a lively symposium lasting nearly an hour, during which the Monk answered all questions asked, as fast as they came, and in nearly every case clearly, and to the satisfaction of his audience.

The Hindoo believes in one God, omnipresent, omniscient, without beginning and without end—not outside of nature—but in all things. Man is body, soul, spirit. The spirit is divine and immortal. The body material and mortal. The soul is the connecting medium. He believes in the old doctrine of metempsychosis which under the name of re-incarnation is apparently so novel to Americans. Each state of man is as truly, he believes, a result of his life in a previous state, as any other effect is the result of its cause.

Man is immortal. 'If my spirit is eternal, I did not come into existence a few years ago but have lived in many forms. Without end, implies without beginning.' He claimed that the theory of evolution, new to us, is old as the Vedas to the Hindoo. He believes that God incarnates himself not once in one land but many times in many lands. Whenever man needs new truth and is





prepared to receive it God becomes man and reveals that truth. We may not reject any of these teachers without rejecting a portion of the revealed truth. Hence the Hindoo believes all religions, and attacks none. No religious teacher was ever mobbed in India or ever needed protection from the Hindoo. Each carries his own vessel to the fountain and carries away as much as he can contain of the pure water of truth. Why should I try to make another carry water in my cup.

Few present could accept the theories advanced, none but must have admired the spirit of charity in which they were held and maintained. On the other hand none could dissent from his eloquent definition of Love to God, or doubt that any man who feels the need of God as a drowning man feels the need of a breath of air will fail to find Him. This part of the lecture was eloquence of the highest order. 'No book can teach you God. You can only see Him by the reflection of that which is within your own spirit.' If he has revealed himself to Moses, to Buddha, to Jesus and the prophets, will he not also reveal himself to me? Shall he be my father and not speak to me as well as to them? I may not hear His message as clearly as they heard it, but the fault lies in me.

During the delivery of this part of the lecture, the tick of a clock could have been heard anywhere in the church. The rich and mellow voice of the Hindoo held the audience spell-bound, and at no time more marked than during his recital of the story of Krishna the resemblance of which, in its main, points to the story of the Christ, is so striking. Verily, Vive Kananda is 'an orator by Divine right'.

At the close of the lecture the questions came thick and fast. The caste system, bathing in the Ganges, child marriages, burning of widows, the use of temples, the Sabbath, Karma, &c., &c., were among the subjects of questions. Burning of widows he declared has never been a religious sacrifice. Child marriages were necessary at one time to protect their girls from the Mahommedan conquerors, under whose iron

heel India was ground down for eight centuries. The crushing of bodies under the car Juggernaut was classed with myths. Perhaps the least satisfactory answer was given to ex-Alderman Platt's inquiry as to the results of the work of Christian missionaries. The Monk had never studied statistics or read reports on this subject, hence could not tell without danger of inaccuracies.

All in all, those present were entertained, instructed, and made more charitable by this eloquent 'heathen'.<sup>22</sup>

The *Evening Gazette* reporter, by contrast, seems to have been spiritually asleep, but politically awake, when he wrote this piece on 18 December 1893.

—Vive Kananda, the Hindu, was greeted with a very good audience at the Congregational church on Saturday evening. He is a very pleasing talker and courts inquiries. He flatly denied many of the stories about the natives of India. He said they were a conquered race, and in many respects an oppressed one. They were under the thralldom of Great Britain and he did not feel overly kind toward the Britishers for it. His people were advancing and with less interference would gain more rapidly. He did not argue that the missionaries were or had done any great amount of good. Many people talked of his people that were very ignorant, they had only met the serf element, it had done neither side any particular good. It was fully intended to have Vive Kananda speak again on Sunday afternoon or evening, and three places had been offered for the purpose, but as it was necessary for him to be in Chicago yesterday he was obliged to take the early train for the city.<sup>23</sup>

A reporter for the *Sterling Standard* got a statement from Swamiji regarding women, which was published on 21 December 1893:

Swami Vive Kananda took occasion to say that his observation leads him to believe that the ratio of educated women to the whole number



of women is larger than the ratio of educated men to the whole number of men. The Brahman's observation is not at fault in this respect. That such a condition is new to the world need not be said. What will come of it if the sum total of intellectual ability continues to divide in the same way is an interesting speculation. Lord Lytton's 'Coming Race' may be nearer at hand than has hitherto been supposed (8).<sup>24</sup>

The *Sterling Standard's* editor also stuck this into his 'They Say' column of the same date: 'That Vive Kananda's lecture helped along the evolution theory in the minds of many of his auditors' (20).

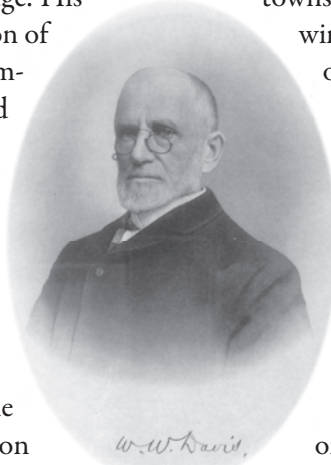
Present readers may feel disappointed that the *Sterling Standard's* account of Swamiji's talk on 16 December 1893 contained so much of verbatim quote from W W Davis's introduction and so little from Swamiji's address. The favouritism was only natural. Prof. W W Davis was a well-known local historian, former school-teacher, Sunday school teacher, longtime president of the board of education and a frequent contributing writer for the *Daily Gazette*.<sup>25</sup> As a boy, he had taken tea with Abraham Lincoln. As a young man, he sparked a debate with soon-to-be-elected President James Buchanan. His father-in-law was a prominent judge. His residence stood next to the mansion of W M Dillon, Sterling's largest employer. In 1890, Prof. Davis had taken a tour of Europe, the Holy Land, and Egypt. Thus broadened, he had given many edifying lectures about places he had been and people he had met.

Prof. Davis seems to have been very enthusiastic about Swamiji, so naturally one might ask, since he had volunteered to host Swamiji on the platform, did he also offer him the

hospitality of his home? On 28 December the *Sterling Standard* reported: 'The returns from the Viva Kananda and Hirai lectures are larger than at first announced. After paying for the church and other incidentals, the relief society receives \$18.25, instead of \$15.' Since this ambitious enterprise of paying for two expensive guest speakers needed to succeed in raising funds for the poor, it seems logical that someone would have asked the guests if they would accept home hospitality rather than a hotel.<sup>26</sup>

'Bellevue Place', the former Davis home, at 913 East Second Street still stands in Sterling. Did Swamiji stay there or at the Bayliss home at 607 Fourth Avenue? Did they all dine together? Did they converse amiably long into the night? Evidently Davis felt that he knew Swamiji well enough that on 21 January 1894 he gave a talk at his own congregation, the English Lutheran church, about 'India and Vivekananda'. It 'drew a large audience, and those who had the privilege of being present express[ed] great pleasure over the lecture. It was given in Mr. Davis' best form; was instructive, entertaining and forcible, and the deductions timely.' On 15 February Prof. Davis announced he had received invitations to give his 'India and Vivekananda' lecture at the nearby towns of Freeport and Oregon later that winter. So thanks to Prof. Davis, news of Vivekananda spread a little further afield in Whiteside County.

Just how well did Prof. Davis understand Swamiji? Two years later, on 14 December 1895, he was conducting an ancient history class for the University Association at the Sterling Business College and Hinduism came under discussion. 'Reference was made by one of the ladies to Vivikananda, the Hindoo who spoke in Sterling just after



W W Davis (1837–1925)

the World's Fair, and it was decided that he did not represent any marked type of Hindoo religion, his ideas being intermixed with Christian sentiment.<sup>27</sup> So here was the Catch-22 clause that bound the provincial American mindset of 1893: if you could understand what Swamiji was saying—if what he said appealed to your Christian heart—then what he said must have been Christianised, because everyone knew for a 'fact' that Hinduism was difficult to comprehend because it was permeated with superstition, mythology, and priestcraft.<sup>28</sup> Swamiji's genius was that he made Advaita Vedanta comprehensible in simple language. And to communicate that simplicity and clarity of thought to American audiences, he had to speak not only in excellent English, he had to speak in American idiom, and more importantly, he had to speak in Christian idiom. Any scholarly debate over Western 'influences' in Swamiji's thought must take into consideration that those 'influences' were tools he utilised to penetrate the ideology that his audiences were immersed in.

There is newspaper evidence that people continued to follow Swamiji's career long after he left Sterling. For some, he remained a figure of controversy. For others—those who needed to see him in person—we can only hope that their innermost prayers were answered, and thereafter they confronted life with renewed strength and buoyancy.

The thought-provoking events of 1893 seem to have roused the Baylisses' creative energies. Since much of Clara's public life was tied to her husband's career, it is important to say a word about him. It is reasonable to assume that Prof. Bayliss was present at Swamiji's

lecture. He was a trustee of the Sterling G A R and should have supported his wife's very public role in this charitable cultural event.

By 1893 Alfred Bayliss had been Superintendent of Sterling's school district for almost twenty years. Just a few months after Swamiji came to Sterling, he changed the course of his career by stepping into politics. In 1895 he moved his family to Chicago, and in 1896 he moved again to Streator, Illinois to be the principal of its high school. He did very well there, gaining a greater voice statewide. In Streator, the Baylisses would have had mutual acquaintances who held vivid memories of Swamiji. These were Col. Ralph Plumb, who endowed the high school and hosted Swamiji in October 1893, and Reverend L J Duncan, and also, no doubt, W W Bean, the editor of the *Daily Monitor* who defended Swamiji from attacks by the *Free Press* after his lectures there.<sup>29</sup>

Clara's fighting spirit was put to good use when Alfred ran for the office of State Superintendent of Public Instruction in 1898. He served the state of Illinois for eight years, pushing the Legislature to offer free public high school education for every girl and boy, a concept which at that time was considered visionary. His later work as the administrator of Western Illinois Normal School was cut short when a riding accident took his life. A memorial testament by one of his colleagues may also describe, in part, the idealism Clara shared with her husband:

I am not sure that Alfred Bayliss had any formulated religious beliefs. He was respectful to all forms of religious practice, from the noisy salvationist to the thought-calm theosophist. In that, as in all deep and serious

*The Congregational Churches, Sterling*



things of life, he was satisfied with the thought rather than the display. Prayer he was wont to say is the soul's sincere desire expressed in deeds. All honest work is dignified and ennobling, true work is sanctified. Work to him was truly Worship. I know that he believed that this world order is beneficent, that he believed in the upward progress of man and that each is responsible.<sup>30</sup>

Clara expressed her ideals in an imaginary dialogue about the value of work and gender equality printed in the *Chicago Tribune* of 12 May 1895: '[Now] the employer never knows his employee. He treats him as the machine which makes the money. And the divinity within the laborer rebels. He isn't demanding money. He is demanding recognition as a human being; as an infinite spirit which only lacks the opportunity and environment to be the equal of his master.' Clara wrote that women wanted the same recognition 'as a spirit' that men do. 'She feels that she has a mission in the world as well as man. What she asks is the privilege of living the life for which God fitted her; to be herself; to follow the divine promptings of her soul.'

Swamiji attracted people with noble hearts. Clara and Alfred Bayliss were persons who were receptive to Swamiji's spiritual idealism, persons who were ready to act on that idealism in the larger world. To be fair, the Baylisses obviously culled spiritual inspiration from multiple sources, but my point is that they were the type of kindred spirits who would have carried the memory of Swami Vivekananda forward into their life's battles.

W W Davis lived a long and contented life. He travelled around the world in 1911 with

his brother Henry and returned to Sterling ready to share his knowledge with one and all. Friends called him the 'Grand Old Man' and the 'Sage of Bellevue'. He passed away on the Fourth of July, 1925. His obituary in the *Daily Gazette* on 6 July stated 'there was probably no other man in Whiteside County who had so large a personal acquaintance and who was thought of so highly by so many friends'.

Clara Bayliss became an activist for educational causes through her role as chairman of the Education Committee of the Illinois Federation of Women's Clubs. She continued to write. Her first science textbook was published in 1897. She is best known for a series of juvenile educational books about Native American folklore and anthropology.<sup>31</sup> In 1941, at age 93, Clara was living with her youngest daughter, a professor at the University of Wisconsin.

The First Congregational Church of Sterling is still a vital presence in that community. Locals call it the Big Red Church. It is a prominent landmark on Second Avenue between Third and Fourth Streets. Although it was built during Swamiji's lifetime—in 1896—it is not, however, the building that he spoke in. In 1893, First Congregational still met in the wood frame church they built in 1864. It was directly adjacent to the site of the congregation's future church. Swamiji would have seen a livery stable where the brick church stands now. We are indebted to the Big Red Church for photographs that show us not only the exterior and interior of the hall Swamiji spoke in, but also a snow covered scene much like the one he encountered. Gaslight fixtures illuminated the interior of the

Old Church Building, Sterling







*Original Chairs Inside the Present Day Church at Sterling*

sanctuary that cold winter's eve. Please take particular notice of the spindled wooden chairs lining the back and sides of the platform. I was thrilled to be shown a row of the actual, original, wooden chairs inside the present day church. Not all of the chairs are extant, but we can cherish the thought that one of these precious chairs may have been the holy *asana* that Swamiji sat upon. PB

### Notes and References

1. C K B, 'The Parliament of Religions,' *Sterling Standard* (28 September 1893), 3. There is more material on the Parliament of Religions on pages 4 and 5 of this issue, including Max Müller's paper on India and the Buddhist Kinzo Hirai.
2. This event was probably Swamiji's lecture at the Third Unitarian Church in Chicago. See Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in the West: New Discoveries*, 6 vols (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1985), 1.95.
3. The *Sterling Standard* was a weekly paper and C K B had so much important material from the Parliament that the notes continued into October.
4. C K B, 'Post-Parliament Notes,' *Sterling Standard* (19 October 1893), 5.

*Livery Stable Where the Brick Church Stands Now*



5. Duncan was back in Sterling for a conference in April 1894 according to *Sterling Standard* of 18 April 1894. Later in 1894, another minister, Reverend Hoffman of Bloomington, organised the society into The People's Church and they switched from meeting in Rock Falls to meeting in Sterling. See 'Peoples Church', *Sterling Standard*, 11 December 1896.
6. When the Non-Sectarians became the People's Church they met in the Academy of Music and later in the G A R Hall.
7. Post No. 274 of the Grand Army of the Republic was started in 1883 and had 98 members in 1908. See W W Davis, *History of Whiteside County* (Chicago: The Pioneer, 1908), 412.
8. Since it was a civic organisation that sponsored Vivekananda to speak at the church, Reverend Crowl's presence may not have been required, but because he was a new pastor, and the next day, Sunday, people would be talking about what they had heard the night before, I think it behoved him to be present.
9. *Sterling Standard* (23 November 1893), 7.
10. See Asim Chaudhuri, *Swami Vivekananda in Chicago: New Findings* (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2012), 157. In addition, Reverend Duncan had been a missionary for the Western Unitarian Conference before his permanent posting in Streator.
11. *Sterling Standard* (30 November 1893), 8.
12. *Swami Vivekananda in the West: New Discoveries*, 1.207.
13. *Ottawa Daily Republic* (27 November 1893), 3.
14. The announcement appeared in the *Evening Gazette* on 6 December 1893 and twice in the *Gazette*, which was a separate paper, on 8 December 1893, on the front page and page 7.
15. Dr Sarah Hackett Stevenson was a socially prominent physician and a relative of the US vice president Adlai E Stevenson. She was the first woman to be admitted to the American Medical Association; the first woman to be appointed to the staff of Cook County Hospital; the first woman to be appointed to the Illinois Board of Health. She studied in England under Thomas Huxley. In 1893 she was president of the Chicago Woman's Club and many of its members knew Swami Vivekananda. In her late years she retired to a Roman Catholic convent.
16. The article of *Sterling Standard* of 28 September

- 1893 states: 'Vivekananda intends to remain in this country and lecture, for the purpose of raising funds to organize a movement for the improvement of the condition of the poor in India.' Hence, the rationale, 'For the poor.' However, if this advertisement referred to the Woman's Relief Corps' charity, then the poor were elderly Civil War veterans and their widows.
17. When newspapers reported Clara's many social activities as a mother, political wife, and club-woman, she was Mrs Alfred Bayliss, but when she penned her own articles and books, she was Clara Kern Bayliss. Signing her reportage of the Parliament of Religions as only C K B was not for anonymity's sake—everyone knew everyone else's business in Sterling—it must have been the newspaper's practice.
  18. Manilal Nabhubhai Dwivedi did not attend the Parliament of Religions. Vivekananda had previously met Dwivedi when he went to Gujarat. Dwivedi's paper on Hinduism was read on the second day of the Parliament in the afternoon session by Virchand Gandhi, according to *The Inter Ocean* (13 Sep 1893), 3. A countenance like Buddha's would have been clean-shaven. All the other Indian delegates except Narasimhacharya had facial hair. Narasimhacharya was certainly well-liked, but the historical record points to Vivekananda as the hands-down favourite.
  19. In the *Sterling Standard*'s article of 28 September 1893 A M E Bishop William E Arnett is quoted as saying: 'Yes, I have faith in the negro. He and I have been intimate for several years now; and I want you to *weigh* him—before you find him wanting. TRY HIM—(before you hang him.)'
  20. In 1893 the Ethical Culture Society described itself thus: 'Interpreting the word "religion" to mean fervent devotion to the highest moral ends, our Society is distinctly a religious body. But toward religion as a confession of faith in things superhuman, the attitude of our society is neutral. Neither acceptance nor denial of any theological doctrine disqualifies for membership.'
  21. Mangasarian's writings are available online. In 1908 he published *The True Jesus: Is He a Myth?* It doubted the historicity of Jesus. In 1900 the Ethical Society was reorganised as the Independent Religious Society of Chicago and in 1920 that group joined the Western Unitarian Conference.
  22. *Sterling Standard* (21 December 1893), 17.
  23. Sterling had two passenger depots, the Chicago and North Western, and the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy.
  24. The reporter's speculation is a sensationalist one. Edward Bulwer-Lytton's 1871 popular novel about a futuristic, subterranean, master race was touted by occultists such as Madame Blavatsky, amongst others.
  25. In 1893 W W Davis was working as a book-keeper in his brother's mercantile business, Terrence Buckaloo, Sterling Historical Society.
  26. Conversely the reason why the Relief Society made such a slim profit on its investment may have been because they paid either \$2 each to the Galt House or \$1.50 each to the Randolph Hotel for a night's stay. Hopefully, Swamiji did not have to stay in a hotel. On 15 December, the night before he arrived, a man was nearly asphyxiated by gas at the Randolph Hotel. On 24 November, both hotels served raccoon for dinner!
  27. 'The Hindoos were the subject matter of a profitable discussion. They have always been a people of diversities, small kingdoms and different types, although alike in generalities. Religiously, they have two ancient systems. That portrayed in the four Vedas is the oldest, Brahmanism represented the priestly craft, and for twenty-two centuries dominated the Hindoos. Buddhism arose later, and modern Hindooism may be said to be the joint product of both.' See *Sterling Evening Gazette* (14 December 1895), 4.
  28. A good example of this line of thought is found in 'A Hindoo Temple, Rites and Ceremonies by which the Idol is Honored, A Complex Institution Over Which the High Caste Brahmans Exercise Supreme Authority', *Sterling Evening Gazette* (30 June 1892).
  29. For details of this editorial battle, see Asim Chaudhuri, 'Swami Vivekananda in Stretator', *Vedanta Kesari*, 84/10 (October 1997), 373.
  30. S B Hirsch, 'Alfred Bayliss', *Journal of the Proceedings of the Illinois Education Association Annual Meeting*, 1912, 76.
  31. *History of Whiteside County*, 159. See also, *Two Little Algonkin Lads* (Boston: Educational Publishing, 1907) <<http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn5hqz;view=rup;seq=45>> accessed 16 July 2015.

# Samanya Dharma and Spirituality

Nithin Sridhar

HINDU DHARMA SPEAKS ABOUT four-fold goals of human life termed as the four *purusharthas*. *Purusha* means a human being and *artha* means object or goal. This framework of life wherein each human being has an obligation to pursue the fourfold goal in her or his life is a unique and very important contribution of Hindu philosophy. Human life is considered very precious because when compared to plants, animals, and other organisms, humans alone have a fully developed faculty of intellect. All organisms except humans are invariably driven by natural instincts. Though these naturally developed instincts help organisms in their survival, they also bound and limit them. Humans alone are not limited by natural instincts and hence can exert their discrimination and free-will. It is to regulate and provide guidance for the exertion of this free will in a righteous and meritorious way that the scriptures have advised the framework of fourfold goal that a human should strive to attain.

The four goals of human life are dharma, artha, kama, and moksha. Kama refers to all kinds of worldly desires. Every person has some desires that she or he wants to attain. It may be to look beautiful, earn money, or have a relationship. Every kind of desire can be called kama. Similarly, all wealth and objects that are acquired in order to fulfil one's desires and enjoy a comfortable life is artha. In short, kama and artha refer to enjoyment of worldly pleasures and worldly objects respectively. But, it is not desirable to lust after all kinds of desires and objects.

If a person does so, it would surely lead to one's fall. A person who kills someone for money may end up in prison. Similarly, a person who is unable to control the sexual urges may end up assaulting a member of the opposite sex and may also end up in prison. It is dharma or the sense of righteousness and duty that should decide whether an action is desirable or not, whether a desire or property must be acquired or not. Without the principle of dharma, the world will end up in chaos. Hence, the principle of dharma must act as a guiding force in the pursuit of kama and artha.

Moksha refers to the ultimate liberation from the bondage of the world and being established in knowledge and bliss. All spiritual paths are aimed at achieving this goal alone. But, moksha cannot be achieved by a person who is completely attached to worldly pleasures. Srinivasa Rao states: 'Achieving moksha becomes possible only when a life pursuing desires (kama) and wealth (artha) has been led consistently within the framework of dharma. Dharma thus plays a very crucial role in not only ensuring a good life here and now, but also in enabling one to attain the state of supreme good or liberation, from which there is no lapsing back to karma and re-birth.'<sup>1</sup> That is, only such a person who adheres to dharma in all actions will eventually develop the purification of mind and dispassion towards worldly pleasures and will be able to turn the mind towards supreme emancipation. Hence, the practice of dharma becomes inevitable for attaining moksha.



### Definition of Dharma

The term 'dharma' can be variously understood to mean ethics, morality, law, justice, duty, and righteousness depending upon the context. In the context of an individual, dharma refers to the duties and the righteousness of actions. In the context of society, dharma refers to social harmony and morality. In the context of governance, dharma refers to law and justice. And in the cosmic context, dharma refers to cosmic order and balance. But, none of these terms individually capture the width and depth of the meaning of the term 'dharma'. S L Pandey writes: 'Dharma is a unique and colorful concept that cannot be adequately translated into any other language and cannot be equated collectively or separately with faith, religion, Bhakti, morality, law, duty, customs or *mores*, because of its synthetic unity on one hand and its transcendence on the other.'<sup>2</sup>

Literally, dharma means that which upholds. The *Mahanarayana Upanishad* states that dharma supports the whole universe and removes all sins.<sup>3</sup> Sri Krishna says in the *Mahabharata* that dharma is that which sustains.<sup>4</sup> The *Vaisheshika Sutra* describes dharma as that which causes material and spiritual attainment in everyone.<sup>5</sup> From the *Isha Upanishad* we can gather that Brahman has ordered the whole universe by allotting to each object their respective duties based on their inherent qualities.<sup>6</sup> It is through these allotted duties that Brahman supports the universe. Hence, these duties, these allotted actions that sustain the universe by causing material and spiritual attainment in each being constitutes dharma.

Once the definition is clear, the next question would be: What are the means by which one can determine what constitutes dharma? The *Apastamba Dharma Sutra* says that dharma and *adharma* do not reveal themselves on their

own.<sup>7</sup> Further, each person will have a different opinion regarding what actions constitute dharma and what actions constitute *adharma*. Hence, if logic and individual opinions alone were to be taken into account, then everyone will defend their own actions as righteous no matter how unrighteous they may have been. Hence, Sri Krishna says in the *Bhagavadgita* that 'the scriptures is your authority as regards the determination of what is to be done and what is not to be done.'<sup>8</sup> The *Manu Smriti* states that the Vedas are the very root of dharma and that the Smritis, the conduct of the virtuous people who practise dharma and self-conscience are integral to understanding dharma.<sup>9</sup> The *Yajnavalkya Smriti* elaborates the list and includes Puranas, Nyaya, and Mimamsa texts as essential to understanding dharma.<sup>10</sup> Hence, a person can determine whether an action is according to dharma or not by first verifying whether such an action is stipulated or prohibited or allowed by the scriptures, the Vedas and the Smritis. And Swami Vivekananda says: 'And the law is that wherever these Puranas and Smritis differ from any part of the Shruti, the Shruti must be followed and the Smriti rejected.'<sup>11</sup> So, the Smritis are to be followed only so far as they do not contradict the Vedas. While following the scriptures one should note if any related injunction of the scripture is relevant to the present situation. If there is no clarity, then the advice of saints, teachers, and elders can be sought. And finally, one must consider whether one's own conscience is satisfied or not. Only such a process in which the intellect is guided by the tenets of the scriptures and the purity of mind can arrive at a proper conclusion regarding the righteousness of any action.

### Classification of Dharma

The scriptures elaborate on the tenets of dharma

that different people must follow in different situations. It is said that the tenets of dharma that lead to the ultimate good are different for different *yugas*.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, they speak about different duties for people with different temperaments and in different stages of life, and duties at the time of calamity or sorrow. Yet, scriptures also speak about certain tenets of dharma that are common to every person. These universal tenets of dharma like truth and non-violence applicable to every person irrespective of his class, gender, or station in life are called 'samanya dharma' or the general dharma. And the duties and obligations that are unique to every individual depending on the time, place, class based on one's quality and station in life are considered 'vishesha dharma' or special dharma. An individual's *svadharma* or personal dharma is a combination of both common and special duties. In fact, without an adherence to *samanya* dharma, a person can never do justice to one's practice of special duties. For example, a brahmana priest who becomes greedy and asks a hefty amount as the *dakshina* or fees for conducting a ritual becomes ineligible and incompetent to conduct such ritual due to the violation of one of the basic tenets of common dharma, the control of the senses. So is the case with a businessperson who cheats the customers for earning more profit. Hence, the practice of both *samanya* dharma and *vishesha* dharma are vital for the overall well-being of an individual and without performing the general duties, one becomes ineligible to perform the special duties.

### Tenets of Samanya Dharma

Various scriptures speak about universal tenets. The *Manu Smriti* gives a list of five such tenets.<sup>13</sup> The *Arthashastra* of Kautilya mentions six tenets;<sup>14</sup> the *Yajnavalkya Smriti* mentions nine;<sup>15</sup> the Mahabharata also mentions nine;<sup>16</sup>

the Vamana Purana mentions fourteen tenets;<sup>17</sup> and the Bhagavata mentions thirty tenets<sup>18</sup> as *samanya* dharma that are applicable to every person. It is important to understand what tenets constitute *samanya* dharma before understanding their role in spirituality. Hence, we will take up a few important tenets which are common to many texts.

*Ahimsa*: It literally means non-violence or non-injury. But, here the violence or injury referred to is not applicable only to bodily injuries. *Ahimsa* should be practised in action, speech, and thought.<sup>19</sup> *Himsa* or violence in action refers to causing physical harm to others. It may be harm to a human, animal, insects, plants, or any other living organism. Any physical action that causes harm or imposes pain on any living being is considered violent action. Similarly, words that cause mental agony to others or words that are intended to act as curses that create imbalance in the surroundings are violent speech. And finally any thought about harming others either physically or mentally is violent thought. Hence, the practice of *ahimsa* includes non-injury to other living beings through action, speech, and thought.

The question that often arises is: if *ahimsa* is non-injury to every organism and every living being, then is it pacifism? The answer is an emphatic no. The practice of non-violence and non-injury refers to not causing harm or violence for selfish purposes. It does not include the use of violence for the purpose of dharma.

A soldier's special duty is the protection of one's country from attack by hostile enemies. Hence, the soldier does not fight and kill in a war for fulfilling some selfish desires, but lays down one's life for the sake of the country. Such selfless violence committed in wars is considered as dharmic *himsa*, righteous violence, and hence does not violate the tenet of

*ahimsa*. Similarly, the sacrifice of certain animals in some of the yajnas is also not considered to be violence.<sup>20</sup> The purpose of the yajna is the well-being of society. The priests who conduct them do not do so for their selfish desires, instead it is done for the spiritual and material welfare of society. Hence, such violence cannot be called *adharma*. Hence, *ahimsa* as an absolute duty is not applicable to every person. Only the sannyasins who have renounced all desires and actions, take the vow of practising absolute non-injury because they have renounced the world to attain self-realisation. For sannyasins all activities that involve even a little of violence are prohibited. For all other people, though absolute non-violence is the ultimate goal, they are permitted the limited use of violence during the performance of their special duties as prescribed in the scriptures.

*Satya*: The practice of *satya*, truthfulness as a dharma entails truthfulness in thought, speech, and actions. A person must practice what one preaches and preach what one practises. A person must speak only that which one knows to be the truth. Thought, speech, and action must be in line with the truth. 'Truth is to align thought, speech, and action with reality and speak the reality for the welfare of living beings.'<sup>21</sup> 'Abusing (others, speaking) untruth, detracting from the merits of all men, and talking idly, shall be the four kinds of (evil) verbal action.'<sup>22</sup> Another important aspect of the practice of *satya* is that truth must be spoken in a pleasant manner. 'Let one say what is true, let one say what is pleasing, let one utter no disagreeable truth, and let one utter

no agreeable falsehood; that is the eternal law' (4.138). If some unpleasant news must be conveyed to someone, it should be done at a proper time and in a subtle way so as to minimise the pain to the listener. Such an austere practice of truth in every word uttered, in every action performed, and in every thought that crosses the mind constitutes *satya* dharma.

*Asteya*: Any thought, speech, or action that amounts to stealing or misappropriation by force or fraud is *steya*. *Asteya* is the opposite of that. Therefore, a person practising *asteya* should never take away anything that belongs to another. Further, one must not even desire to possess them. One must never speak about something which is not one's own understanding. One must never steal or misappropriate other's ideas and discoveries and claim them as one's own. *Steya* does not refer only to the stealing of other's property. It may even refer to kidnapping other's family members. Hence, the practice of *asteya* involves a strict control of mind and senses such that one does not entertain even any ideas of stealing other's ideas, property, or family members.

Ramana Ashrama, Thiruvannamalai





*Shaucha*: It refers to both external cleanliness and internal purity. External cleanliness constitutes cleanliness of the body through bathing and the like, cleanliness of various objects of use with water, mud, and other materials, and cleanliness of the surrounding environment including keeping the ground, water, and air clean. Internal cleanliness refers to the purification of the mind by removing impurities like lust and anger.

*Indriyanigraha*: It refers to the control of the mind and the senses. A person who is in the grip of the senses is ever running behind worldly pleasures and hence will end up committing mistakes that result in sorrow. For such a person it is said: 'Neither (the study of) the Vedas, nor liberality, nor sacrifices, nor any (self-imposed) restraint, nor austerities, ever procure the attainment (of rewards) to a person whose heart is contaminated (by sensuality)' (2.97). Hence, without controlling the mind and the senses, there is neither material happiness nor spiritual bliss.

The question is: how should a person restrain the mind and the senses? The Smritis answer: 'Desire is never extinguished by the enjoyment of desired objects; it only grows stronger like a fire (fed) with clarified butter' (2.94). However, proper restraint cannot be achieved merely by suppression of desires. Restraint of the senses is possible only through constant awareness and vigilance. 'Those (organs) which are strongly attached to sensual pleasures, cannot so effectually be restrained by abstinence (from enjoyments) as by a constant (pursuit of true) knowledge' (2.96). One should practise constant monitoring of one's thoughts, speech, and actions. Every object towards which the mind or the senses get attracted must be observed and examined by the intellect. The intellect must question whether the object is useful, whether possessing it has any real benefit for

oneself and the others, whether possession of such an object is according to dharma or not. It is only by the practice of constant awareness and restraint that a person will be able to attain complete *indriyanigraha*.

*Daya*: The *Shandilya Upanishad* defines *daya* as 'kindness to all creatures at all places'.<sup>23</sup> Hence, a person who has *daya* is always kind and compassionate towards all beings. Such a person will never do anything that can harm any being and will never utter anything that would cause pain to someone. Such a person would not even think of hurting others. That person's thoughts, speech, and actions will be full of kindness for everyone and would be aimed at achieving the well-being of everyone.

*Danam*: It refers to the act of charity. The *Shandilya Upanishad* says that *dana* means the giving away of 'ethically earned money, grains, and the like' (1.2). The Gita speaks of three kinds of charity—the sattvic, the rajasic, and the tamasic:

That gift is referred to as born of *sattva* which gift is given with the idea that it ought to be given, to one who will not serve in return, and at the (proper) place, (proper) time and to a (proper) person. But the gift which is given expecting reciprocation, or again, with a desire for its result, and which is given grudgingly—that is considered to be born of *rajas*. That gift which is made at an improper place and time, and to undeserving persons, without proper treatment and with disdain, is declared to be born of *tamas*.<sup>24</sup>

Sattvic charity is the best form of charity and tamasic charity must be completely avoided. *Anasuya*: *Asuya* means jealousy and *an-asuya* means the absence of jealousy. A person must never be jealous of another person's knowledge, wealth, or prosperity as jealousy leads to frustration and anger that in turn leads to various wrongdoings. A jealous person thinks of

stealing other's wealth or causing some harm to the other. Hence, jealousy will result in mental confusion and social discord and ultimately take a person to spiritual fall. Therefore, the tenet of *anasuya* has been prescribed as one of the common tenets of dharma.

*Kshama*: It means 'forgiveness'. The *Shandilya Upanishad* describes *kshama* as 'forbearance of everything, the pleasant and the unpleasant, praise and insult'.<sup>25</sup> A person whose mind is unsteady and is affected by praise or criticism, will bear grudge when not praised or when criticised. Such a person can never forgive those who appear to cause real or imagined harm. This holding of grudge gives rise to frustration and anger which in turn deludes the intellect.

*Svadhyaya*: It refers to the study of various scriptures and contemplating upon them. 'The study of Vedanta, the chanting of *Rudraprasna* a hundred times, and the repetition of Om and other mantras, and that which makes one attain *sattva*, is called *svadhyaya* by the wise.'<sup>26</sup>

Those who are not competent to study Vedanta can read the Puranas and the epics like the Mahabharata.

*Brahmacharya*: It refers to a practise of celibacy. The *Shandilya Upanishad* defines brahmacharya as 'the renunciation of sexual intercourse at all times in thought, word, and action'.<sup>27</sup> Brahmacharya leads to control of the mind and the senses and ultimately results in the cessation of desires.

### Samanya Dharma and Yoga

Patanjali describes yoga as 'the cessation of the impressions in mind-stuff'.<sup>28</sup> Yoga is a state of samadhi, wherein the Atman is realised, free from the limitations of the non-self.

This state is achieved by stilling the mind by stopping all thoughts.

Thoughts can be stopped and the mind can be stilled only by the constant practice of dispassion. The mind is continuously distracted by various factors like sickness, apathy, doubt, carelessness, laziness, overindulgence in worldly pleasures, delusion, lack of progress, and instability and such a person is exposed to pain, depression, trembling, and difficulty in breathing. These distractions can be removed by various methods that include friendliness, compassion, delight, and equanimity.

Patanjali has systematised these methods and has chalked out an eight-limbed process that slowly leads a person towards the ultimate state of samadhi. These eight limbs are: *yama*, external discipline; *niyama*, internal discipline; *asana*, *pranayama*, breath control; *pratyahara*, withdrawal of the sense organs; *dharana*, steadfast concentration; *dhyana*, meditative absorption; and samadhi.

*Yama* and *niyama* are foundational without which the practice of *asana* or *pranayama* will never bear fruit. The tenets of *yama* and *niyama* are the tenets of *samanya dharma* and are universal and apply to everyone. *Yama* includes non-violence, truth, non-stealing, brahmacharya, and *aparigraha*, not holding more than what is necessary. *Niyama* includes cleanliness, cheerfulness, austerity, *svadhyaya*, and surrender to God. The practice of these tenets of *samanya dharma* will regulate one's lifestyle, build character, remove mental distractions, and purify the mind. The purification of mind leads to stillness of the mind. Hence, when a person established



in *yama* and *niyama* practises *asana* and *pranayama*, she or he will be able to withdraw the senses and attain one-pointed concentration which will ultimately lead to *samadhi*. Therefore, *samanya* dharma is an inseparable aspect of yoga, without which any practice of yoga would be fruitless.



*A Bell Hanging Near the Pond at  
the Thousand Pillar Temple, Hanamakonda*

is brought about only by the practice of the tenets of dharma. The *Narada Bhakti Sutra* says: 'Non-violence, truthfulness, purity, compassion, piety, and other essentials of good life, should be maintained.'<sup>29</sup> Even in bhakti, a constant practice of *samanya* dharma is inevitable.

### **Samanya Dharma and Bhakti**

Every person has loved someone or experienced love in one form or the other. Almost every time love between two people creates an attachment. Bhakti is not normal love. It is the ultimate form of love because it creates no attachment. Instead it is liberating. It liberates a person from this never ending cycle of happiness and sorrow and birth and death.

The path of bhakti is the path of service to and of taking refuge in God. A devotee may consider God as a master, a parent, a lover, or even as an offspring. A devotee may also worship God in one's heart as one's own innermost Atman. Whatever may be the manner of worship, a devotee aims to first attain nearness and finally attain complete oneness with one's chosen ideal. But, this complete absorption in God is possible only when a person renounces one's ego and attachment to the body and the mind. But, renouncing one's I-ness and mine-ness is not easy as one is hindered by the internal impurities like lust, anger, and pride. Hence, a person can attain true bhakti only when one is able to purify one's heart by destroying these inner impurities. And this destruction of inner impurities

### **Samanya Dharma and Jnana**

The tenets of *samanya* dharma are very vital in the path of knowledge as well. The word 'Vedanta' literally means the end of Vedas. The indirect meaning is the culmination or the last word of the Vedas and it refers to the Upanishads that teach the end goal of all spiritual practices, the attainment of moksha, liberation, through the knowledge of the unity of jiva and Brahman. The liberation from the cycle of birth and death results from the direct knowledge of Atman, the innermost Self, which is realised as Brahman itself. At the dawn of knowledge, all the objects of the universe which were previously perceived as being different from Brahman are realised as being non-different from Brahman in reality. This direct knowledge of the reality that Atman alone exists, liberates a person from the bondage of birth and death because bondage itself was rooted in ignorance about the true nature of Atman.

The Upanishads lay down the requisite qualifications for a person to become eligible to practise Vedanta. The *Taittiriya Upanishad* says: 'Having taught the Vedas, the preceptor imparts this post-instruction to the students: "Speak the truth. Practise righteousness. Make



no mistake about study.”<sup>30</sup> In *Vivekachudamani*, Acharya Shankara enumerates the basic qualifications necessary to practise Vedanta called the *sadhana-chatushtaya*, fourfold spiritual practice: discernment, dispassion, control of the internal organs, control of the external sense organs, forbearance, withdrawal of the mind from external sense objects, faith in the guru and scriptures, one-pointed meditation on Brahman, and an intense desire for moksha. These are also either the tenets of *samanya dharma* themselves or those that are attained through the practice of *samanya dharma*.

### Conclusion

The importance of *samanya dharma* in spirituality irrespective of the chosen path is in that it leads to the purification of the mind. The mind is afflicted with various impurities that are generally classified into the six passions: *kama*, lust; *krodha*, anger; *moha*, delusion; *lobha*, greed; *mada*, pride; and *matsarya*, jealousy. These impurities lead a person to commit various mistakes which in turn tighten the karmic bondage. As long as a person is under the influence of these mental passions, she or he cannot make any spiritual progress. Hence, purification of the mind by the destruction of these internal enemies is the very first stage in spirituality. And this is possible only by a constant practice of the various tenets of *samanya dharma*. That is why *Manu Smriti* says: ‘Austerity and sacred learning are the best means by which a Brahmana secures supreme bliss; by austerities he destroys guilt, by sacred learning he obtains the cessation of (births and) deaths.’<sup>31</sup>

The role of *samanya dharma* in any spiritual path is foundational in nature. It is a basic discipline that imparts the required qualities to a spiritual aspirant that makes one fit to practise any spiritual discipline that leads to moksha. ☪

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# The Birds of Sri Ramakrishna: The Vulture

Dr Suruchi Pande

IN THE ANCIENT INDIAN TEXTS, though we may not find the word *paryavarana*, environment, we do find the use of the terms *vyashti*, the individual, and *samashti*, the collective. If one deeply understands that one is just a part of this whole universe and dependent on Nature, one will stop the misuse and mishandling of natural resources. Both the individual and the collective have the earth as their basis. The root of the Sanskrit word for the earth, *prithivi*, is *prith*, which means 'to extend'. Ancient Indian literature has given great respect to the earth. Earth is revered as one of the five gross elements. A compassionate attitude towards Nature is seen in the life of all saints.

In the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, we find many references to Nature. Sri Ramakrishna experienced oneness with Nature. While explaining how our mind or intellect makes us wander here and there and finally finds peace in our inner self, Sri Ramakrishna says:

Once a bird sat on the mast of a ship. When the ship sailed through the mouth of the Ganges into the 'black waters' of the ocean, the bird failed to notice the fact. When it finally became aware of the ocean, it left the mast and flew north in search of land. But it found no limit to the water and so returned. After resting awhile it flew south. There too it found no limit to the water. Panting for breath the bird returned to the mast. Again, after resting awhile, it flew east and then west. Finding no limit to the water in any direction, at last it settled down on the mast of the ship.<sup>1</sup>

This is close to what the sage Uddalaka says to his son, Shvetaketu, in the *Chhandogya Upanishad*: 'As a bird bound to a string, flying in all directions and failing to get an abode anywhere else, repairs to the place of bondage alone, in this very way indeed, O good-looking one, that mind, flying in all directions and failing to get an abode anywhere else, resorts to the vital force itself, for, O good-looking one, the mind is bound to the vital self.'<sup>2</sup>

Mahendranath Gupta, the chronicler of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, commented on his impression of Sri Ramakrishna: 'It was as if he were standing where all the holy places met and as if Sukadeva himself were speaking the word of God.'<sup>3</sup> It is interesting to note that the symbolic image of Puranas is parrot-faced. That is why a good student and a good speaker is called *shuka*, a parrot: 'As a well-trained parrot pleases the preceptor as well as the other people with its sweet words, a good listener, who hears the preaching from sage Vyasa and then conveys it beautifully with a controlled speech is called *shuka*.'<sup>4</sup>

Here the role of a good listener and a communicator is defined in a unique manner. The word *shuka* means a parrot and is also the name of the sage who remained connected to Nature even after his death. There is an interesting incident from his life. When sage Shuka felt that he had fulfilled the mission of his life, he decided to leave his mortal coil. Before doing so he requested permission from his father, sage Vyasa. Vyasa was overwhelmed with grief but he honoured his son's desire. Later Shuka headed

towards north, immersed in the solar circle, and remained filled in the universe in the form of the Atman. His father Vyasa was extremely sad and he wailed by calling the name of his son. Then the flora in the forest responded to his call from all the sides.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Homa Bird**

Sri Ramakrishna refers to a mythical bird named Homa:

The Vedas speak of the homa bird. It lives high up in the sky and there it lays its egg. As soon as the egg is laid it begins to fall; but it is so high up that it continues to fall for many days. As it falls it hatches, and the chick falls. As the chick falls its eyes open; it grows wings. As soon as its eyes open, it realizes that it is falling and will be dashed to pieces on touching the earth. Then it at once shoots up toward the mother bird high in the sky.<sup>6</sup>

We do not come across any reference to the Homa bird generally in Indian literature but it is interesting to note that its reference is found in the Iranian literature. There are links in the Rig Veda and the Zoroastrian Avesta. So there are chances that the mythological story about ‘Huma’ or ‘Homa’—*hu* refers to spirit—from the Iranian mythology and Sufi fable is reflected here.

### **Vulture: The Mahagridhra**

Sri Ramakrishna compares the vulture with the so-called scholars who remain attached to worldly passions irrespective of their learning:

Mere pundits are like diseased fruit that becomes hard and will not ripen at all. Such fruit has neither the freshness of green fruit nor the flavour of ripe. Vultures soar very high in the sky, but their eyes are fixed on rotten carrion on

*Homa Persepolis, Iran, Achaemenid Iranian Art c.500 BCE*







Indian Vulture

the ground. The book-learned are reputed to be wise, but they are attached to 'woman and gold'. Like the vultures, they are in search of carrion. They are attached to the world of ignorance. Compassion, love of God, and renunciation are the glories of true knowledge (101). ...

You may learn a great deal from books; but it is all futile if you have no love for God and no desire to realize Him. A mere pundit, without discrimination and renunciation, has his attention fixed on 'woman and gold'. The vulture soars very high but its eyes are fixed on the charnel-pit (368). ...

There are many pundits who speak words of wisdom. But they merely talk; they don't live up to them. They are like vultures, which soar very high but keep their gaze fixed on the charnel-pit (419). ...

You must have noticed kites and vultures soaring very high in the sky; but their eyes are always fixed on the charnel-pits. Do you know the meaning of 'charnel-pits'? It is 'woman and gold'. ... Do you know the meaning of 'kites and vultures'? There are many people who talk big and who say that they have performed most of the duties enjoined in the scriptures. But with all that their minds are engrossed in worldliness and deeply preoccupied with money, riches, name, fame, creature comforts, and such things (469).

Kites and vultures soar very high indeed, but their gaze is fixed only on the charnel-pit. The pundit has no doubt studied many books and scriptures; he may rattle off their texts, or he may have written books (669). ...

The vulture soars very high in the sky, but its eyes are fixed on the charnel-pit. It is continually looking for charnel-pits, carcasses, and dead bodies (730).

Sri Ramakrishna refers to the vulture in many other instances:

Don't forget yourself because of what you hear from your flatterers. Flatterers gather around a worldly man. Vultures gather around the carcass of a cow (615). ...

I regard scholars and the book-learned as mere straw. If I see that a scholar has no discrimination and renunciation, I regard him as worthless straw. I see that he is like a vulture, which soars high but fixes its look on a charnel-pit down below (650).

He is Brahman and He is Sakti. There is no end to Him, no limit. Nothing is impossible for Him. No matter how high the kites and vultures soar, they can never strike against the ceiling of the sky. If you ask me what Brahman is like, all I can say is that It cannot be described in words (920). ...

In the Valmiki Ramayana, the vulture has played an important role in the form of Jatayu and Sampati, who helped Sri Ramachandra in his mission of searching Sita. Jatayu is also called *maha-gridhra*, great vulture. The name 'Jatayu' comes from the root '*jat*' meaning twisted locks of hair. This name is applicable to the bearded vulture. Sampati is the brother of Jatayu. The Sanskrit word *sampata* also means the flight of an arrow. The name Sampati suggests the unique flight of the vulture.

In the Buddhist literature the vulture is referred to in some of the Jataka stories.<sup>7</sup> In the

‘Gijjha Jataka’, story number 164, the Bodhisattva is born as the vulture. In the Parsi tradition dead bodies are left atop the Tower of Silence to be offered to the giant birds, the vultures.

Then why is there a negative shade to the reference to vultures? We will try to analyse through its root verb, *gridh*, which means to endeavour to gain, to desire, to be greedy, to strive after greedily, to deceive, or to cheat. This bird is called *gridhra* because it devours the carrion. That could be the reason for the negative light the vulture is seen in. There are several synonyms in Sanskrit for the vulture: *dakshayya*, alert; *dooradrik* or *dooradarshana*, farsighted; *sudarshana*, sharp-sighted; *vajratunda*, hard-beaked; and *khagendra*, the king of the birds.

We find references to the vulture in the Sanskrit literature from the times of the Rig Veda. ‘The oldest Sanskrit names for this bird are *alaja* in the Samhitās and *āja* noted in the additional list of Vulture-names.’<sup>8</sup> The Valmiki Ramayana speaks of the great capacity of the vulture to see up to great distances.<sup>9</sup> We also come across references to vultures and their scavenging habits, references in a negative connotation. Sanskrit literary texts like *Nagananda*<sup>10</sup> and *Urubhanga*<sup>11</sup> refer to their habit of feeding on carcasses. In ancient Sanskrit texts, the flight and speed of the vulture is admired.

### Ornithological Information of Vulture


In India, we find many varieties of the vulture. The Asian king vulture, the red-headed vulture, Indian black vulture, or Pondicherry vulture, *Sarcogyps calvus*, called *sumukha*, is a medium sized vulture of 76 to 86 cm in length, weighing 3.5 to 6.3 kg, and having a wingspan of about 1.99 to 2.6 metres. It has ‘comparatively slim and pointed wings. Adult mainly black with bare reddish head and cere,

white patches at base of neck and upper thighs, and reddish legs and feet; in flight, greyish-white bases to secondaries show as broad panel (particularly across underwing). Juvenile is browner and white down on head; pinkish coloration to head and feet, white patch on upper thighs, and whitish undertail-coverts are best features.’<sup>12</sup>

The cinereous vulture, *Aegypius monachus*, the monk vulture, the black vulture, or the *kala-gridhra* is a large raptorial bird 98 to 120 cm in length with a 2.5 to 3.1 metre wingspan. Males weigh from 6.3 to 11.5 kg, while females weigh from 7.5 to 14 kg. ‘Very large vulture with brown parallel-edged wings. Soars with wings flat ... At a distance appears typically uniformly dark, except for pale areas on head and bill’ (ibid.).

Red-headed Vulture, Bandhavgarh National Park, Madhya Pradesh



The Indian griffon vulture, *Gyps fulvus*, *merutunda*, having a high or deep beak, is 93 to 122 cm long with a 2.3 to 2.8 metre wingspan. The males weigh 6.2 to 10.5 kg and females weigh 6.5 to 11.3 kg. The Indian slender-billed vulture, *shakuna*, *Gyps tenuirostris*, is 80 to 95 cm long. The white-backed, Bengal vulture, or the white-rumped vulture, *Gyps bengalensis*—called the *shitikakshin* in the *Taittiriya Samhita*<sup>13</sup>—weighs 3.5 to 7.5 kg, is 75 to 93 cm long, and has a wingspan of 1.92 to 2.6 metres. The white scavenger vulture, Pharaoh's chicken, or Egyptian vulture, is 47 to 65 cm long. The wingspan is 2.7 times the body length. This vulture has an average weight of 2.4 kg. It is also called *goshtha kukkuta*—*goshtha* is a village of cowherds and *kukkuta* is a cock—that is, a vulture frequenting the settlements of cowherds. All these vultures feed on carrion. 

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White-rumped Vulture



IMAGE: [HTTP://AKADIME.DEVIANTART.COM/ART/WHITE-RUMPED-VULTURE-295134841](http://akadime.deviantart.com/art/White-rumped-Vulture-295134841)



# Memory

Swami Satyamayananda

(Continued from the June 2015 issue)

MATTER WHETHER GROSS or subtle is insentient. How can that which is insentient contain knowledge which is a property of sentience? 'A corpse is not intelligent, nor a piece of meat in a butcher's shop.'<sup>31</sup> Neurons and neurotransmitters come under the category of matter. What is the difference between an atom in the brain and an atom in this paper you are holding? Do atoms give rise, as one reads this, to the concepts forming in the mind? Mammoth instruments used in physics to smash atoms, reveal only a host of even more particles, when one atom is deliberately guided, speeded, and collided against another. Matter being insentient there has to be a sentient principle that recognises this fact. Insentience cannot depart from its nature and turn suddenly sentient in the twinkling of an eye. Nor is matter like a pendulum swinging between sentience and insentience. If one is thinking that these are modern deductions, it is wrong; what is true is the modern idiom. These ideas of impermanence and change of material forms are as old as philosophy itself and Plato uses them, while emphasising the cyclical nature of all things. Plato also emphasises the existence of virtues or values like truth, goodness, and beauty, *satyam*, *shivam*, and *sundaram*, which are non-tangible and non-sensory. From where do these ideas arise? And how does the mind form value concepts? When one sees a form, a simultaneous knowledge of perfect form arises in the mind. The mind compares the empirical form with

past knowledge that it has. The soul being immortal 'remembers' its journey in the realm of ideal forms or eternal ideas. This knowledge of the soul can be recovered through *anamnesis* or recollection. The highest virtue is wisdom that comes through divine inspiration and by which the soul can know its real nature. The knowledge of the essences of ideal forms is beyond gross matter and thus transcends this world of sorrow. The realm is eternal, pure, indivisible, and free from birth and death. Philosophers are eligible for this realm because they question not only external nature but also their thoughts. The intellect becomes refined and penetrative and then through *anamnesis*, philosophers attain those lofty heights where re-birth is unnecessary.

## **The Human Being's Deeper Dimensions**

The half-mantra of the *Isha Upanishad*, 'Om! O my mind, remember all that has been done, remember all that has been done'<sup>32</sup> shows a dying person calling on one's mind to remember all deeds done in one's life. This person has worshipped and meditated on Brahman with attributes and hence is heading for relative immortality. Not the person's body obviously but something deeper and more essential that survives death. One of the things a personality depends on is memory; memory cannot be the sum of neurological processes as the brain perishes with the body. No autopsy report talks about engrams in the brain neither

does it indicate what happened to the person whose brain it was nor where she or he has gone. It simply confirms death. This person in the *Isha Upanishad* has conquered death through divine thoughts and memory. This transformation takes place through meditation. 'Continuous flow of thought means successive transformation of the mind in the form of the Reality.'<sup>33</sup> It really means that the subject by degrees gets identified with the object's name and form. This person has meditated on the Brahman with attributes with one's subtle body, modified with the name and form of that reality. Name and form is the mind's way of working, which in other words can be said to be memory. Then, after the fall of the body, the subtle body attains that very reality. It is ordinarily seen that one tends to gravitate to only those places and things, which are in harmony with one's mental make-up. 'For instance, if my previous actions have all been towards drunkenness, I will naturally gravitate towards persons who are transmitting a drunkard's character.'<sup>34</sup>

Generally, people are not much removed from animals and other lower beings in their search for mate, food, and survival. Genetically, all life is one. But the intelligent, knowing that life has to have more meaning than mere mundane actions, strive for something higher. Such persons have a vague idea of body and self as different; only such persons are oriented towards scriptural studies and duties that are enjoined in them. For, the scriptures point towards the essential core in the personality that has a different destiny from that of the body. Acharya Shankara puts it beautifully in the preamble to his commentary on the *Brahma Sutra*: 'So far as empirical behaviour is concerned, the use of the means of perception by the wise is similar to that of lower animals ... Of course, it is a fact

that a man acting intelligently does not acquire the competence for scriptural duties unless he has a *knowledge of the relationship of his soul with the next world*.'<sup>35</sup> Such persons know that the results of worshipping and meditating on Brahman with attributes cannot be obtained in this body and in this plane of existence but needs a different body and plane to reap them. This is the import of the mantra, 'O my mind, remember all that has been done'.

It is a settled doctrine in Vedanta, emphasised in the Bhagavadgita over and again that the last thought that arises in one's mind is what bears fruit as the next life. The last thought is nothing but repeated thoughts or firm memory of what the person has practised all through. Sri Krishna says to Arjuna: 'Remembering whatever object, at the end, he leaves the body that alone is reached by him O son of Kunti, because of his constant thought of that object.' This phenomenon is described vividly by the Upanishads:

When the self becomes weak and senseless, as it were, the organs come to it. Completely withdrawing these particles of light, it comes to the heart. When, the presiding deity of the eye turns back from all sides, the man fails to notice colour. (The eye) becomes united (with the subtle body); then people say, 'He does not see'. The top of the heart brightens. Through that brightened top the self departs, either through the eye, or through the head, or through any other part of the body. When it departs, the vital forces follow, when the vital force departs, all the organs follow. Then the self has particular consciousness, and goes to the body, which is related to that consciousness. It is followed by knowledge, work, and past experience. Just as a leech supported on a straw goes to the end of it, takes hold of another support and contracts itself, so does the self throw this body aside—make it senseless—take hold of another support and contract itself.'<sup>36</sup>

### Memory's Classic Heights

To the wise, the law of karma is essentially the law of freedom. Karma implies a continuous identity of a self. The body is born, limited, bound, subject to illness, decay, and death. The mind has a greater ambit than the body but it too is bound. This mental bondage primarily depends on thoughts and mental impressions. Mind and the senses necessitate objects of sight, taste, touch, smell, and hearing, all pertaining to the world. These give rise to emotions, will, desire, and dreams, also conforming to the world. When thoughts and impressions pertaining to the sensory world abound, worldly memory and worldliness is the result; this in turn dictates thoughts. Sri Ramakrishna puts it in his unique style: 'If one eats radish, one belches radish.'<sup>37</sup> It is a vicious circle; thus we spin our own bondage. To break this bondage, counter thoughts are needed. These counter thoughts and impressions have to pertain to divinity, they have to be unworldly. For only that which is beyond the world can help break this bondage. To constantly cultivate religious thoughts, perform rituals and duties is the way to attain this state.

Another effective path preached by the Vedas and most of the Hindu scriptures and commentaries thereon is: 'non-attachment' to the results of work and dedicating all actions to God. This is one of the greatest themes of Hinduism, so lofty yet so easy. There are two distinct attitudes to do this: 'One whose mind is absorbed in the Self, who is a knower of Reality, thinks thus, "I certainly do not do anything" even while seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, moving, sleeping, breathing, speaking ... knowing for certain that the organs function in relation to the objects.'<sup>38</sup> The other is: 'Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever sacrifices you perform, whatever you give, and whatever austerities you undertake—make them as an offering to

Me (God)' (9.27). Either practice or attitude has brought in the idea of a higher power, a higher Self; after this, the puny ego cannot appropriate and hoard anything anymore. The supreme Self takes its place. It is the puny ego's attachment to karma and its results, to objects and its remembrance that acts as a catalyst in making the mind retain impressions. In the absence of attachment, ownership, and doer, karma and impressions are like water trying to wet a lotus leaf. Once the higher power or Atman is acknowledged, we take a step backwards, as it were, from ordinary 'I'. This stepping back shall also give a correct perspective of the bondage we are in. Here we can see our follies, our delusions, and our irrational chase for the will-o'-the-wisp. Arjuna stepped back from this vortex of delusion, by the Lord's grace, and perceived his real nature as the Atman, only then did he utter the classic words, 'My delusion has been destroyed; I remember everything by your grace' (18.73). 'Stepping back' from the body and *even the mind*, is a tremendous statement. In order to understand what this realisation is, we need to look at *pratyabhijna*, a type of recognition.

### Pratyabhijna

Most of our energies are spent in working on the world and either allowing ourselves to be worked upon or fighting against some work. Work means modification; in this case, influence. We influence the world with different levels of our personality: the physical, mental, moral, emotional, intellectual, aesthetical, and spiritual. Likewise, the world influences us on these levels. In this tremendous activity of exchange, there seems to be a basic drive, a hunger, as it were, for recognition. 'As a person, I need to be recognised and known'—nobody however lowly is bereft of this desire. In this melee, we find our place in the world; rather the world shows us our proper place. Nobody gets more or less than what one



has worked for. There is no need to cry foul, no need to weep and wail. The intelligent find out early, the dull ones pay dearly. Most problems could be solved if one could really recognise and accept the level of one's virtues and vices, knowledge and ignorance, beauty and ugliness, strengths and weaknesses, wealth and poverty, and so on. This recognition itself would act as an incentive for further progress.

Philosophically, self-recognition implies that the person is aware that she or he is the same person who struggles, weeps, rejoices, and who, day and night works to influence others and gets influenced, starting from childhood to old age. It is also, more importantly, the recognition of oneself as the same person, who slept, dreamt, and who woke up. There is a continuity of self-identity and this re-cognition is *pratyabhijna*. Self-recognition, self-remembrance, is like a thread that seems to tie all our experiences. *Pratyabhijna* or *Pratyavijna* is not memory in the ordinary sense of the term. The person who recognises and the person who is recognised are both one. To explain: the doer and the deed are the same. The karma and its effect are upon the agent itself. For example, rice is cooked, the effect of cooking is on the rice. The subject and the object, Swamiji says, can be separated in print but not in reality.<sup>39</sup>

How is it possible for one who recognises and is recognised to be the same? To illustrate: time presupposes motion and space, likewise motion presupposes time and space, and space presupposes time and motion. One cannot look at these three things in isolation. Similarly, an agent presupposes karma and consciousness, karma presupposes an agent and consciousness, and consciousness presupposes an agent and karma. Knowing and doing can only proceed from this self-awareness of oneself as a conscious entity. Consciousness is the very anvil on which all experiences of knowing and doing are hammered

and shaped. The Atman, Self, is Consciousness. Consciousness always implies Self-Consciousness. Thus *Pratyabhijna* is the re-cognition of this light of Self-Consciousness of the *sakshi-chaitanya*, witness consciousness, which shines through all states of knowing and doing at every moment. What then about deep sleep when apparently the powers of knowing and doing are held in abeyance? In reply Advaita Vedanta says: there is a remembrance, a re-cognition, after waking, of oneself as the same entity that slept and which also witnessed the state of sleep when nothing was present. This very fact proves the witness consciousness. Another idea is: during sleep there is an active *vritti*, impression, of *tamas*, which is witnessed.

Advaita Vedanta metaphysics does not stop at showing the consciousness underlying the individuality, otherwise it won't be metaphysics. It proceeds outwards to search for the same truth that pervades everything. Consciousness, it was mentioned, is always Self-Consciousness and more importantly, everything is meant for it. Does it mean there are many Selves? No! Consciousness is singular; bodies are plural, from bacteria to the human being and even beyond. So this *sakshi chaitanya* cannot be yours, mine, the tiger's, and so on, it has to be of Ishvara, God. It is Ishvara that is the Atman in all bodies and also behind the universe. As the Lord himself says in the Gita: 'O descendant of Bharata, know me, the Lord, to be the knower of the field (body) in all fields (bodies).' 40 The individuality of Arjuna, conjured by the body-mind complex was really due to *moha*, delusion. When it vanished by God's grace, there appeared the universality of the Atman.

### **Body-Thought-Impression (Memory)—Karma-Self**

Many thoughtful people besides Hindus,

Buddhists, Jains, believe in reincarnation. In reincarnation, the individual self along with the mind creates the body. Swamiji says: 'The body is but an outer covering of the mind.'<sup>41</sup> To be precise, the body is created with the instrumentality of karma. To be even more precise, with *samskaras*. The body is gross and perceptible; thoughts are on the conscious plane and their counterpart, memories, *samskaras*, are below consciousness. *Samskaras* of a class group together forming minor karmas, this is deep in the subconscious mind. Smaller karmas in turn group into a major karma, this is still deeper in the subconscious mind. Behind is the empirical self, the deepest, that ties everything together. All these dimensions belong to the same entity. The outermost dimension is body, its subtle dimension is thought, subtler are *samskaras*, subtler still is that which makes up minor karmas, even deeper than this is the level where major karmas reside and the subtlest is the self. To most people, ignorant and gross in their outlook, the subtle has vanished. They think and believe only in the perceptible like the *Charvakas*. Sri Ramakrishna speaks of such people: 'However you may reason and argue, the feeling that the body is identical with the soul will somehow crop up from an unexpected quarter.'<sup>42</sup>

To use an illustration: the *sukshma sharira*, the subtle body, is like the banks of a reservoir. The reservoir's bottom is the empirical self. The varying depth of water can be termed as different levels of the subconscious, with the topmost being consciousness. The water is the *samskaras* and karmas, both minor and major. Rains feed the reservoir, which are the various sensations entering through the sense organs. Hence it is never empty because the rainfall, sensations, is continuous. At the same time, the reservoir does not overflow due to evaporation. This evaporation is the worked out karma. But this

evaporation itself is the cause of rainfall, thus the reservoir is always full. The empirical self that thinks itself as the doer, *karta*, and enjoyer, *bhokta*, sets the whole process in motion. Thus the individual self is smothered in a double bind of thought and *samskara*, conscious and subconscious, of karma and its effects. To step out of the main theme a bit: on karma depend the body's health, wealth, and enjoyment, of pleasure and pain, and vice versa. Today, even medicine and psychiatry are not shy of talking about the role of the mind in maintaining the health of the body. To return to the theme: thus the self traverses through high and low births, like nails pared off grow once again, so does the self discard bodies. The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* puts it lucidly:

That Atman, Self, is indeed Brahman, as also identified with the intellect, the *manas*, mind, and the *prana*, vital force, with the eyes and ears, with earth, water, air, and the space, with fire, and what is other than fire, with desire and the absence of desire, with anger and the absence of anger, with righteousness and unrighteousness, with everything—identified, in fact, with this what is perceived and with that what is inferred. As it does and acts, so it becomes, by doing good it becomes good, and by doing evil it becomes evil—it becomes virtuous through good acts and vicious through evil acts. Others however say, 'The Self is identified with desire alone. What it desires, it resolves; what it resolves, it works out; and what it works out, it attains.'<sup>43</sup>

### Knowledge and Fulfilment

To arrive at this truth of the Atman, is a long-drawn-out process. It starts by cultivating spiritual thoughts, divine thoughts. The common saying 'as you think so shall you be, as you will think so will you become', is absolutely true. Spiritual thoughts constantly cultivated, will bear fruits in the form of spiritual memory. It

is like sowing a seed, the tree that grows brings forth thousands of seeds, these in turn in times to come, bring greater and greater harvests. Spiritual practice inexorably suffuses the mind with spiritual thoughts. It first quarters worldly memory, thereby enabling the soul to overpower and control them. These spiritual thoughts are, in Vedanta, the discipline of: *shravana*, *manana*, and *nididhyasana*, hearing, reflection, and profound meditation on the Atman. As the momentum increases, the fire of this practice has a tremendous impact on the transformation of the personality. It sears and makes impotent all the stored karmas, *sanchita*, both good and bad, and those that will fructify in the future, *agami*. *Prarabdha* karmas that have already started bearing fruit in the form of the body are like an arrow let loose and cannot be recalled. It can only wear itself out before falling away. Like a spacecraft's external fuel tanks used for lift-off propels it till the fuel has expended and finally falls away.

As the spiritual *samskaras* related to the Atman become powerful and dominant, correspondingly the seared *prarabdha* karmas obviously become insignificant. Though such a person has old memories, they have become like a semblance. It is ordinarily seen how our childhood appears like a dream when we grow up. The body too, the fruit of these old memories becomes a kind of semblance. If all this becomes a semblance then the question arises: is the empirical self that is the subtlest of this conglomerate which ties everything also a semblance? The answer is yes. Like begets like; semblance begets semblance; real begets real. This answer invokes another question: does it mean there are two selves, one a semblance another the knower of the semblance, the Atman? Semblance cannot eradicate semblance, only the real can. The answer is again in the affirmative. The *Mundaka Upanishad* puts it poetically: "Two

birds that are ever associated and have similar names, cling to the same tree. Of them, one eats the fruits of divergent tastes, and the other looks on without eating'.<sup>44</sup> The tree is the body; the two birds are the two selves; the one that eats the fruits is the empirical self, the semblance; the other that does not eat but just looks on, is the supreme Self. In the *Katha Upanishad*, the two selves are said to 'have entered within the body, into the cavity of the heart' and they are 'compared to shade and light'.<sup>45</sup> The semblance of self is shadowy; the real Self is like bright light.

In Advaita Vedanta reality is 'not two', it explains the semblance, *jiva*, as the reflection of the Atman in *buddhi*, intellect. The reflection is unreal. This reflected self is like an iron ball and the Atman is like fire that heats it. Fire is different from an iron ball but when put in fire, it takes on its properties and becomes like fire. Jnana, knowledge, of the Atman dissipates the false idea. It is like dunking the iron ball in water, which gets rid of its egoism of existence due to borrowed heat. On the other hand, Advaita Vedanta says: *jiva* is Brahman not anything else. The reflection of the Atman in *buddhi*, which conjures the *jiva*, is resolved in the reflected Atman. It is like taking away the mirror, the reflected face is seen no more and it is resolved, as it were, in the face. From this standpoint *jiva* is Brahman.

Another question, though not very relevant, crops up but this is necessary to be metaphysical. If *jiva* along with the body-mind dimension is a semblance, then, is that on which it depends for its workings, the external world, also a semblance? Advaita Vedanta answers this again in the affirmative. For it is not logical for the subject to be a semblance and the objective universe to be otherwise. Both fall into the same order of existence. Advaita Vedanta uses its well-known



illustration: when one sees a snake but later discovers it was a rope, one then realises it was a rope all the time, there was never any snake. But the perception of the snake was real so long as the perception of the rope did not efface it. The snake with its fangs, hood, stripes, and tail was a semblance. Likewise jiva along with its body, mind, and objective world too is a semblance and vanishes. The substratum, the rope, is the real Self, Brahman, or the Atman, which remains unaffected. This Atman is of the nature of Infinite Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. The whole universe, including the highest heaven, relative immortality, is superimposed on it.

### Conclusion

One becomes more than godlike on knowing the distinction between the semblance, individual and collective, and the reality of Brahman. The semblance maintains itself for a while as the *prarabdha* karma works itself out. It is like a ball thrown down a staircase or an aircraft taking a nosedive after developing engine trouble—from which the pilot has bailed out—that flies for a while before crashing. Such a person is called a *jivanmukta*, free while living. This free one finally merges in and becomes the Reality. This is the supreme fulfilment of the human personality.

Swami Ramakrishnananda says:

All memory exists in the mind. Indeed the mind is made up of all memory, therefore all the past and all the future exist in the mind; only the present exists in the senses. How long does any sense perception last? Just the point of time when the object comes in contact with the sense organ, then at once it becomes a matter of memory. This point of time, like Euclid's geometrical point, actually has no magnitude. The present therefore is in reality only such a point without dimensions; but man, because he wishes to live in this sense, magnifies this point, and extends it to the 'present age' or the

'present time' or to 'now-a-days', which means the few weeks or months or years. Actually the present has no conceivable existence and only the past and future have duration. As these exist in mind, the whole of the universe may be said to be in mind; and when a man goes out of his mind he goes out of the universe. This is proved when a man is in sound sleep. At that time he goes away from his mind and his senses. He does not remember that he has a wife or a child; that he owes money; that he has a house or a garden; all these have ceased to exist for him. Only when he wakes up does he gradually remember them and his anxieties return. This shows that they exist only in the mind and have no existence outside. When a man once understands this he ceases to care for the mirage of the mind, the mirage of the senses. This world of outer creation then appears to him hollow and meaningless, and nothing can disturb him.<sup>46</sup>

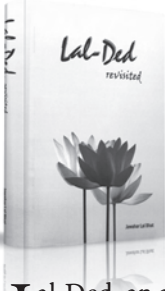
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# REVIEWS

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## **Lal-Ded Revisited**

Jawaharlal Bhat

Vision Creative Services, B-3,  
Ashiana Apartments, Sector-46,  
Faridabad, Haryana 121 003. Email:  
pranavkoul@gmail.com. 2014. 560  
pp. ₹ 595. HB. ISBN 9788190425742.

**L**al-Ded, an accomplished spiritual practitioner of Kashmir Shaivism, proficient in the Sanskrit language and the then available philosophical texts lived during the fourteenth century (1317–88) in predominantly Hindu-Buddhist Kashmir. Islam entered the kingdom during her lifetime and she was aghast at seeing the atrocities being committed against innocent commoners. Her *vakhs*, sentences continued to be transmitted orally for several centuries. A few decades later, Nund Rishi, also called Sheikh-ul-Alam or Sheikh Noor-ud-din Wali, whose shrine is located at Tsrare-Sharif, propagated Islamic principles in *shrukhyas*, *sutras* or aphorisms. Sir George A Grierson and Dr Lionel Barnett collated *Lal-vakhs* between 1900 and 1920. They depended primarily on the mid-nineteenth century collections of *vakhs* made by Bhaskar Razdan, Prakash Kokiloo, and Lakshman Kak. With intellectual support and input from Mukundram Shastri, Grierson and Barnett got the first ‘Lala-Vakhini’ published from the Asiatic Society in Calcutta. Thus, the philosophical four-line poems, *vakhs*, extended to the world an opportunity as well as an invitation to explore Kashmir Shaivism on a broader scale. Following Grierson and Barnett, several scholars brought out *Lala-vakhs* with commentary or produced essays on her poetry from time to time. Some of these scholars include: Sir Richard Temple (1924), Nilaram Cook (1958), Prem Nath Bazaz (1959), Jayalal Kaul (1973), B N Parimoo (1987), S S Toshkhani (1985), B N Sopory (1999), R N Kaul (1999), Ranjit Hoskote (2011), Premnath Shastri

(2011), and P N Raina (2013). The author of the present volume has referred to all the authors given above and many more.

The present volume on *Lal-vakh* is just not another collection of the ‘sentences’ but a devotee’s pilgrimage to the shrine of one’s chosen deity, *ishta-devata*. Jawahar Bhat, the author has taken nearly two decades to bring out this book. Previous publications of the author were connected to his profession and livelihood. For him, the present book is an attempt to search the essence of life. It is a soul-searching exploration.

Each *vakh* has been entered in three scripts: Roman, Nastaliq—Urdu-based script—and Devanagari-Kashmiri—the Devanagari script conditioned or modified to accommodate Kashmiri vowels and consonants. There are instances of inconsistency in the use of Devanagari-Kashmiri in some entries in the volume under discussion; especially in the use of the vowel *matras*, accents. The author has entered 244 *vakhs* in this volume.

All the *vakhs* except the ones placed under the category ‘Miscellaneous’ are four-liners whereas the ones under the category ‘Miscellaneous’ are longer. Each *vakh* has been entered in three scripts as described above with a brief explanation in English at the bottom of the page. The book comprises three sections. The first section consists of a foreword by T N Dhar ‘Kundan’, the preface, the introduction, and ‘On Lalla’s Poetry’. The second section consists of ‘Lalla Vaakh’ and has 244 *vakhs* as mentioned above. The last section contains notes. This section provides an elaborate explanation of each *vakh* listed under the second section. The acknowledgement and references follow. The third section is a novel addition to *Lal-vakh* renderings. The author’s toil, his belief and desire to enable fellow beings to appreciate the ‘essence of being’ becomes amply discernible to the reader in this section. The author wears the mantle of a devout ascetic to inform the

masses to lead a meaningful life by following in the footsteps of great personalities like Lal-Ded. Life, says Lal-Ded, can become meaningful if one attempts to go inside herself or himself in search of the Supreme.

Attainment of moksha or nirvana, the end of the cycle of birth and death, has been Lalla's goal. There is a wide scattering of Sanskrit words in her 'sentences'. Her sentences attempt to make Kashmir Shaivism, Tantra, and Trika accessible to common masses in their vernacular. She has been a rebel to switch over to the common person's speech, when Sanskrit was the language of the intellectual and administrative domains. The *Chum-sampradaya*, the 'I-have' community of mystic poets, had initiated the singing of the praise of the Divine in old Kashmiri during the ninth century, though Sanskrit continued its grasp over other domains.

The author has classified or divided the 244 *vakhs* presented in this volume, into seven categories: Personal celestial experience, 84 *vakhs*; the essential purpose of life, 87 *vakhs*; the concept of the universal lord, 14 *vakhs*; On pranayama and kundalini yoga, 16 *vakhs*; guru sadhana, 13 *vakhs*; on the divine syllable *Om*, 7 *vakhs*; and miscellaneous, 23 *vakhs*. An exploration into understanding the basis of the classification of *vakhs* into seven categories reveals that philosophical import, the *upadesha*, teaching, experience, *sadhana*, meditation, yoga and tantric practices, besides monitoring personal urges and desires, have formed the basis for this classification.

It would be an injustice to the book if at least some *vakhs* are not quoted here. For instance, *vakh* 25: 'I caught a fierce beast [human passion] and tamed it forcefully till it became a timid jackal' (73). *Vakh* 134: 'You cannot reach god by observing fasts and ceremonial rites or providing for himself bodily comfort and ease. The only right guidance in this connection is to focus on Self' (182). *Vakh* 179: 'I toured all ten directions, grasped all and returned; pierced the wind and cut across the void and found Shiva everywhere. I looked into my own inner self, shut up the nine (6+3) openings of my body and found here too only Shiva' (227). *Vakh* 194: 'You face two *karmas* (good and bad) and three causes of the existence in this material

world (*mallas*). Destroy them with the practice of breath (*Kumbhak-Yoga*). You'll earn good honour for your future life. Lift yourself up cutting across the orbit of sun to exonerate yourself from the pain of death' (242). *Vakh* 213: 'High caste and better financial position is not counted there, only your humble behaviour is weighed supreme. Good deeds can help traverse safely this road while the blessing of guru is most desirable to achieve goals' (261). *Vakh* 216: '*Om* is the beginning and *Om* is the end. I constituted my whole being with this sacred sound. I set aside all commonplace and began experiencing His presence within me. That's how I reached the supreme station of the Lord' (264). *Vakh* 231: 'Once you get awakened to yourself, you find the ocean of divinity' (280).

Laleshvari's continuous *sadhana* under the strict guidance of her guru Sri Siddha Srikanth awakened her to 'true spiritual sight and covered her body with the truest celestial robes'. Her four-line poetic compositions, *vakhs*, in common man's vernacular immortalised her. She is an adored spiritual figure among people of all faiths. Her message does not discriminate between the high and the low, it advises everyone to awaken to the love and devotion for the creator. A lay investigator can compare the lexical resources employed in Lal-*vakhs* with the later day poetic renderings to map the development and change of such resources in Kashmiri. Several stories about Lalla's life and achievements have become a part of Kashmiri folklore.

In the future editions of this volume, the Devanagari-Kashmiri orthography needs to be edited and corrected. There are a few omissions that can be taken care of in future editions.

Laleshvari shall continue to be researched and explored by many in the future. Her message of devotion and love of the unitary Supreme creator shall continue to inspire the spiritual minds and seekers of life's higher purpose for ages to come. As she proclaims: 'The sun rises and sets and rises again. *Shiva* creates and destroys and creates again. There's no end to it' (141).

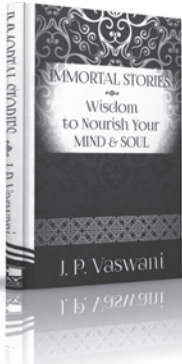
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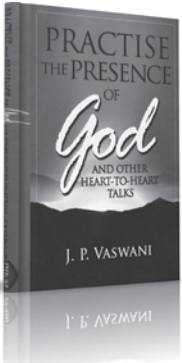
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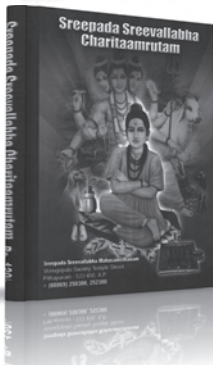
Hay House Publishers (India)  
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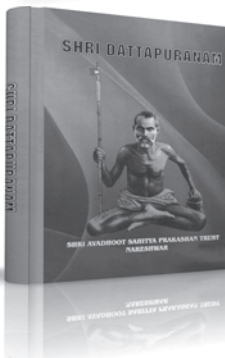
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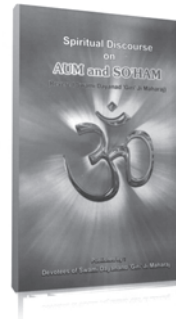
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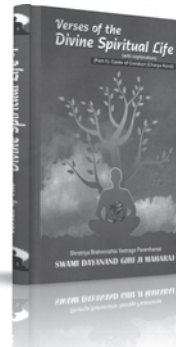


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Devotees of Swami Dayanand  
'Giri' Ji Maharaj, G C Garg, 99,  
Preet Nagar, Ambala City 134  
003. 2014. xxxiv + 368 pp. For  
Free Distribution. HB.

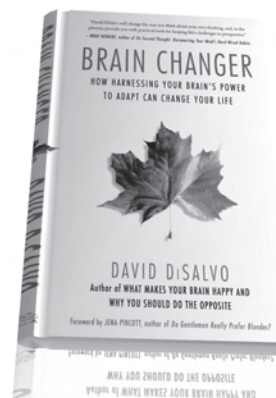
# MANANA

**Exploring thought-currents from around the world.  
Extracts from a thought-provoking book every month.**

## ***Brain Changer***

David DiSalvo

BenBella Books, 10300 N. Central Expressway, Suite 530, Dallas, TX 75231. USA. 2013. xxvi + 245 pp. \$ 16.95. PB. ISBN 9781939529008.



YOU AND I ARE ABOUT TO embark upon something philosophers are fond of calling a ‘thought experiment’. Don’t get me wrong—this won’t be a philosophical exercise in the academic sense. Testing the bounds of rhetoric and wandering the labyrinths of logical fallacies won’t help us reach our goal. This experiment is, in the best sense of the term, pragmatic.

Taking on the roles of curious adventurers—thirsty, perhaps unquenchably so, to know more—we are going to use the tools science has given us and go to work. Our experiment won’t take place in a research lab, though we’ll consult numerous researchers along the way. Together we are going to figure out how it works, why it works, and, most importantly, the implications of changing how it works.

How what works? The ‘it’ of our pragmatic endeavor is nothing less than the glorious marvel of nature that sits just behind our eyes, the reaches of which extend throughout our nervous system. Indeed, when discussing our brain, it’s no exaggeration to say that we’re talking about our body overall, because no part of us operates outside its influence. And when we speak of our mind, as we shall see, the definition expands yet further.

A few decades ago, two schools of scientific thought about the human mind began integrating, and this synthesis of disciplines has created a profound new understanding that continues to transform our culture today.

The first school, cognitive science, brought to the table an emphasis on understanding how the human brain yields consciousness and how thinking drives emotions. The second school, behavioral science, emphasizes what human behavior reveals about how the mind works and how social enculturation influences thinking.

Both of these schools, at least in their modern forms, are relatively new on the scientific scene, so it isn’t surprising that they developed on parallel paths for a few seasons before those paths intersected. When they did, a wealth of combined knowledge and technologies reshaped our understanding of consciousness, thinking, emotion, social behavior, and virtually everything else related to the brain and nervous system. Enhancing our understanding even further, disciplines such as evolutionary psychology, social neuroscience, and behavioral economics have recently joined the party as well.

These brief examples give you just a taste of what has changed in a short time. We’ve made more progress in understanding the brain and mind in the last thirty years than in all of the time leading up to that point.

This book addresses the question ‘How does “the Mind Shift”, as I call it, affect all of us?’

Most of us don’t read research papers in academic journals to learn about the latest neuroscientific findings. Our daily routines seemingly insulate us from concerns about what scientific school is

doing what with whom and where. If it really mattered, someone would tell us about it, right?

Well, it matters, and the book you're reading will explain why. What it comes down to is whether you will benefit from the Mind Shift or not: whether your life will be enriched by the new science-based findings about the brain, or whether you'll remain indifferent. The path of least resistance is apathy. I hope to convince you that the 'apathy of mind' camp is not a good place to set up your tepee. If you do, you can expect to be on the receiving end of the other side's influence with ever-increasing frequency. The reason why is deceptively simple: *they will be better thinkers than you.*

First things first: Who am I and why did I write this book?

First, what I am not: I'm not a psychiatrist, psychologist, neuroscientist, academic researcher, or study-hall lecturer. I am a science writer with an insatiable curiosity about how our brains work and a compulsion to communicate what I learn to anyone as curious as I am.

I write about science and technology topics for magazines large and small, including *Scientific American Mind*, *Forbes*, *Psychology Today*, and *Mental Floss*, and for newspapers such as *The Wall Street Journal*. I write a regular blog called *The Daily Brain*, and I've written a book called *What Makes Your Brain Happy* and *Why You Should Do the Opposite*.

Since writing my first book and countless subsequent articles about the brain, I have become an inveterate optimist about the possibility of change. To put that statement in context, I should tell you that I consider myself a rational skeptic about most topics, and I'm not easily convinced.

But when it comes to the subjects in this book, I am an optimist—and I consider my optimism to be tried, tested, and intact. I feel quite strongly that as you continue reading, you'll adopt a similar mindset, and my hope is that by the end of this

book you'll be as energized and hopeful as I am.

What is the source of my optimism?


Here's the headline version: we now understand the underlying principles of how our brains work and interact with our environments.

In terms of thought and action, the cognitive and behavioral sciences have provided us with innovative ways to think about the brain. In the last few decades, and particularly the last few years, we have uncovered incredible things about our brains—and by extension, our minds.

At the core is an understanding that our brains house constellations of never-ending 'feedback loops', operating together as a conceptual engine that drives our thoughts and behaviors. By better understanding feedback loops and the dynamics that affect them, we are positioned to understand how to change thought and behavior—an inspiring prospect by any measure.

All of the discussions in this book have neurochemical underpinnings. In other words, nothing in our brains occurs independently of the endless exchanges of crucial chemicals such as dopamine, serotonin, and glutamate, to name just a few. To really understand how the brain works, it's important to understand those chemicals and their roles.

Having said that, the endeavor we're embarking on together is not an exercise in brain anatomy and neurochemical intrigue. We're going to pay deference to the chemical drama of our greatest organ without making it our feature presentation. Where it is important to understand how particular chemicals interact, due diligence will be served. But this isn't a neuroscience textbook. Remember, this book has a pragmatic objective: to present the possibility of change.

I am not an 'I found the answer!' sort of person, and this isn't that sort of book. As I said up front, we're undertaking a thought experiment together. We're building our awareness, exploring ways to turn that awareness into action. 



# REPORTS



*Renovated Hospital Building at Mumbai*

## **News of Branch Centres**

Sri C Vidyasagar Rao, governor of Maharashtra, Swami Gautamananda, Adhyaksha, Ramakrishna Math, Chennai, and Swami Suhitananda, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, declared open the renovated hospital building of **Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Mumbai** on 31 May 2015.

Swami Gautamananda inaugurated the extension to the monks' quarters at **Ramakrishna Saradashrama, Ponnampet** on 2 June, the sacred Snan Yatra day.

The year-long programme to mark the centenary of the publication of *Prabuddhakeralam*, the Malayalam monthly journal brought out by **Ramakrishna Math, Thrissur**, was inaugurated on 7 June.

Sri Tathagata Roy, governor of Tripura, visited **Ramakrishna Mission, Viveknagar (Tripura)** on 7 June.

*Opening of Renovated Hospital Building at Mumbai*



Swami Suhitananda inaugurated the first floor of the guesthouse of **Ramakrishna Math, Puri** on 17 June.

Swami Suhitananda inaugurated the computer training centre at **Ramakrishna Mission, Puri** on 18 June.

**Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Guwahati** conducted a free medical camp during Ambuvachi Mela near Kamakhya Temple from 22 to 25 June in which 4,372 patients were treated.

The residential high school of **Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home, Chennai** has secured platinum rating from Indian Green Building Council (IGBC) for its environment-friendly practices such as water conservation, achieving energy efficiency, waste management, and keeping the campus healthy and hygienic. This is the first school in Tamil Nadu and the fourth in India to receive platinum rating, the highest rating, by IGBC. A plaque and a certificate were awarded to the school on 12 June in a function held at Olympia Tech Park in Chennai.

On 14 June, **Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Rajahmundry** conducted a free medical camp at Rampachodavaram, a tribal locality. A team of thirteen doctors, including a few specialists, treated 422 patients in the camp.

Sri Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India, visited **Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Dhaka (Bangladesh)** on 7 June.



*Inauguration of The Extension to The Monks' Quarters at Ponnampet*

Students of our Swami Vivekananda College in **Ramakrishna Mission, Fiji** won the following medals in the National Swimming Championship for Secondary Schools, 2015: (Gold Medal: 19 girls and 18 boys; Silver Medal: 10 girls and 5 boys; and Bronze Medal: 3 girls and 1 boy).

## Relief

**Hudhud Cyclone Relief • Andhra Pradesh:** **Visakhapatnam** centre continued relief operations among the victims of Hudhud Cyclone. The centre distributed 3,300 solar lanterns from 7 to 24 June to 3,300 families in 67 remote villages of Visakhapatnam and Vizianagaram districts affected by the cyclone.

**Summer Relief • Tamil Nadu:** **Salem** centre served buttermilk to 9,277 wayfarers in the month of May.

**Fire Relief •** The following centres distributed various items among the families whose houses had been gutted by fire:

(a) **Assam:** **Silchar** centre distributed 116 dhotis, 137 saris, 162 plates, 164 tumblers, 655 packets of biscuits, and 170 packets of candles among 85 families of Karatigram (Rangpur) village in

Silchar circle of Cachar district on 23 June.

(b) **Jammu and Kashmir:** **Srinagar** centre distributed 75 kg rice, 21 kg dal, 21 kg soybean, 14 l edible oil, 7 kg salt, 7 utensil sets (each set containing 4 plates, 4 bowls, 4 spoons, 4 tumblers, 3 cooking vessels, 2 ladles, a bucket, and a mug), and 7 sets of toiletries (each set containing a toothpaste tube, 4 toothbrushes, a bathing soap, and a packet of washing powder) among 7 families at Bodu Bagh (Khanyar Square) in Srinagar on 7 June.

**Distress Relief • Madurai** centre distributed 4,302 notebooks among 500 students of 30 schools and 5 colleges on 16 June.

**Economic Rehabilitation • Odisha:** **Puri Mission** centre handed over 2 carts to fruit vendors on 18 June.

PB

*Free Medical Camp by Rajahmundry Centre*





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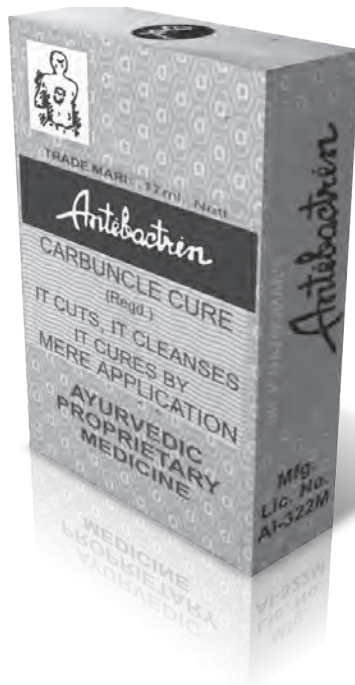


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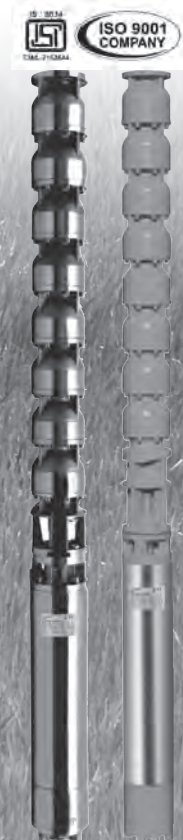
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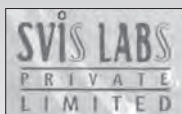
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—Swami Ranganathananda

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*Mankind ought to be taught that religions are but the varied expressions of THE RELIGION, which is Oneness, so that each may choose the path that suits him best.*

— Swami Vivekananda

